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HISTORY of WW2



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INSIDE RUSSIA'S GUNSHIP COLOSSUS

PLUS:

- Cold War black ops ★
- Retreat from Kabul ★
- Battle of Maiwand ★

EXCLUSIVE VETERAN INTERVIEW

SAS



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ELIZABETH I'S IRISH NEMESIS

THE EMERALD ISLE REBEL WHO DEFIED THE TUDOR COURT



TIBET IN TURMOIL

INSIDE THE MAYHEM OF ASIA'S SUPERPOWER SHOWDOWN



WWI TANK KILLERS

THE WEAPONRY DESIGNED TO STOP THE ENTENTE IN ITS TRACKS



THE ORIGINAL AFGHANISTAN WAR

WHY ALL THE EMPIRE'S MEN MET THEIR MATCH IN THE DESERT

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Welcome

“This operation proves that... a small specially trained force can achieve results out of all proportion to its numbers”

– Sergeant Major Harry Vickers on Operation Wallace

Among the most effective military innovations of the 20th century was Special Forces tactics – small-scale, covert, yet incredibly effective methods to disrupt the enemy.

Suddenly, the difference between total victory or utter disaster in the field could be determined by the instincts, training, professionalism, and bravery of a few specialised units.

This issue we present two incredible Special Forces accounts: Britain’s guerrilla campaigning in Occupied France, 1944, and the USA’s clandestine ‘Det A’ outfit, operating on the razor’s edge of Cold War Berlin.

Though by necessity these missions remained secret for decades, their importance, and the stories of the men who fought, can finally be recognised.



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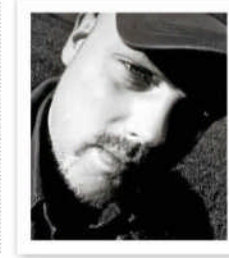
TOM GARNER

This issue Tom recalls one of Ireland’s most famous rebels – the Earl of Tyrone. Find out how he defied the powerful Tudor court over on page 46. His VC Hero this month takes us to the brave conduct of the 28th Maori Battalion in North Africa (p. 82)



GAVIN MORTIMER

France-based author and historian Gavin takes us deep into enemy territory with the SAS over on page 26. He presents thrilling first-hand accounts from veterans, who fought to liberate Occupied France from behind enemy lines.



ROB SCHÄFER

As Britain’s armoured ‘land ships’ threatened to tip the balance on the Western Front, the Germans quickly set about developing weapons and tactics to destroy them – Rob explores these and more over on page 36.

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Members of Special Forces Berlin, ‘Det A’, train in entry tactics. Turn to page 72 for Part 2 of James Stejskal’s feature



SAS



D-DAY MISSIONS

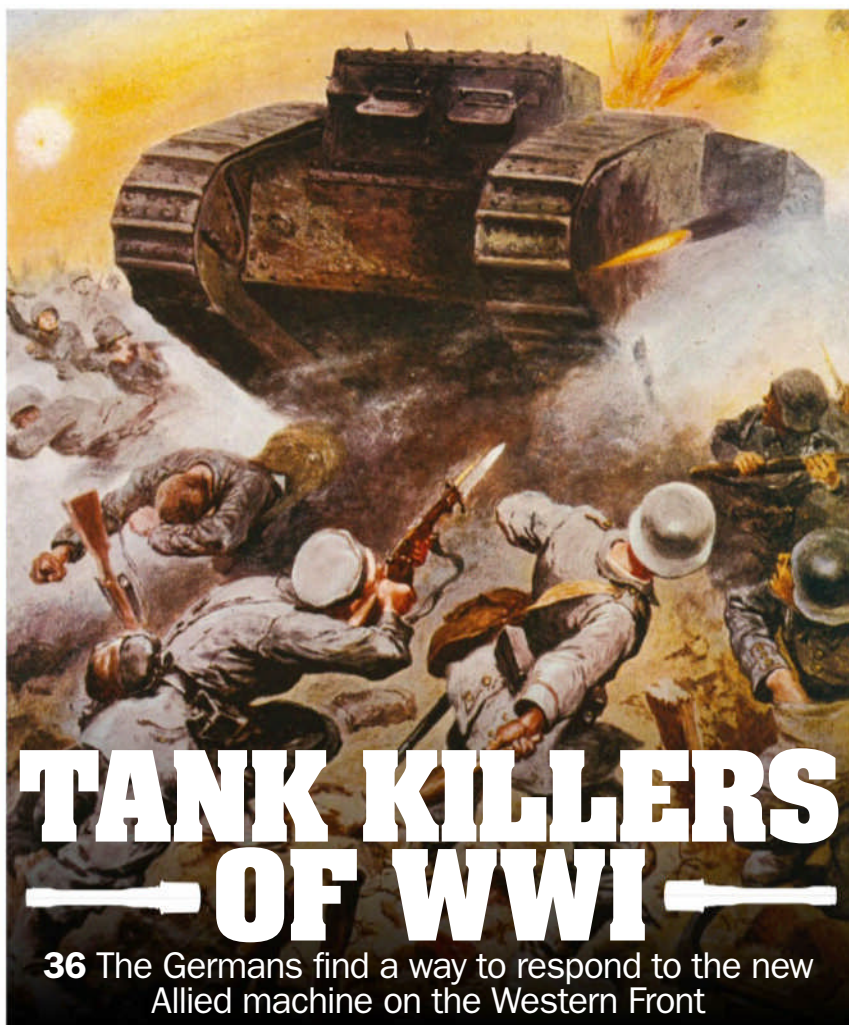
26 Causing havoc across France, these guerrilla units attacked Nazi forces behind enemy lines, destroying weapons, vehicles, and devastating supply lines

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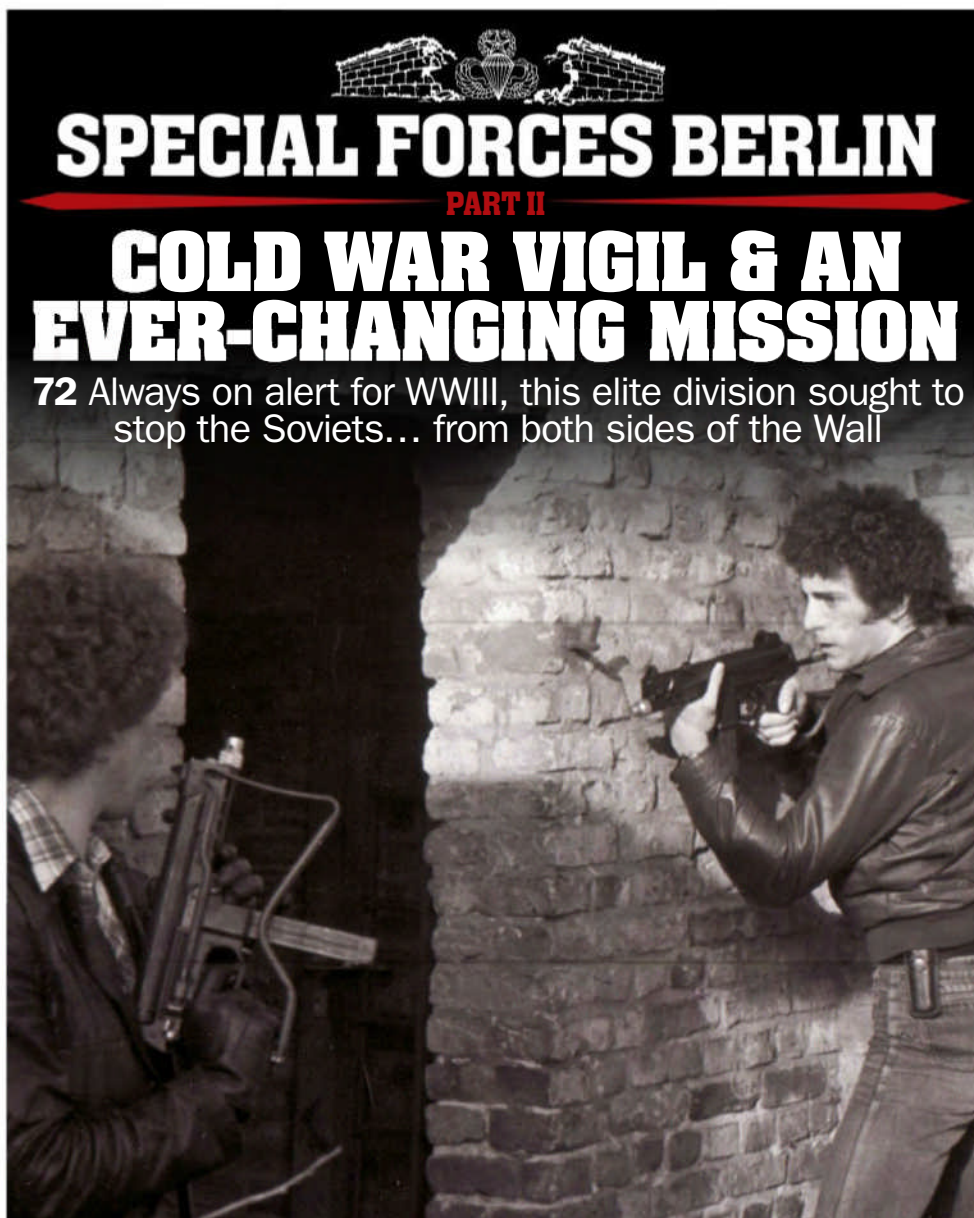
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TANK KILLERS — OF WWI —

36 The Germans find a way to respond to the new Allied machine on the Western Front



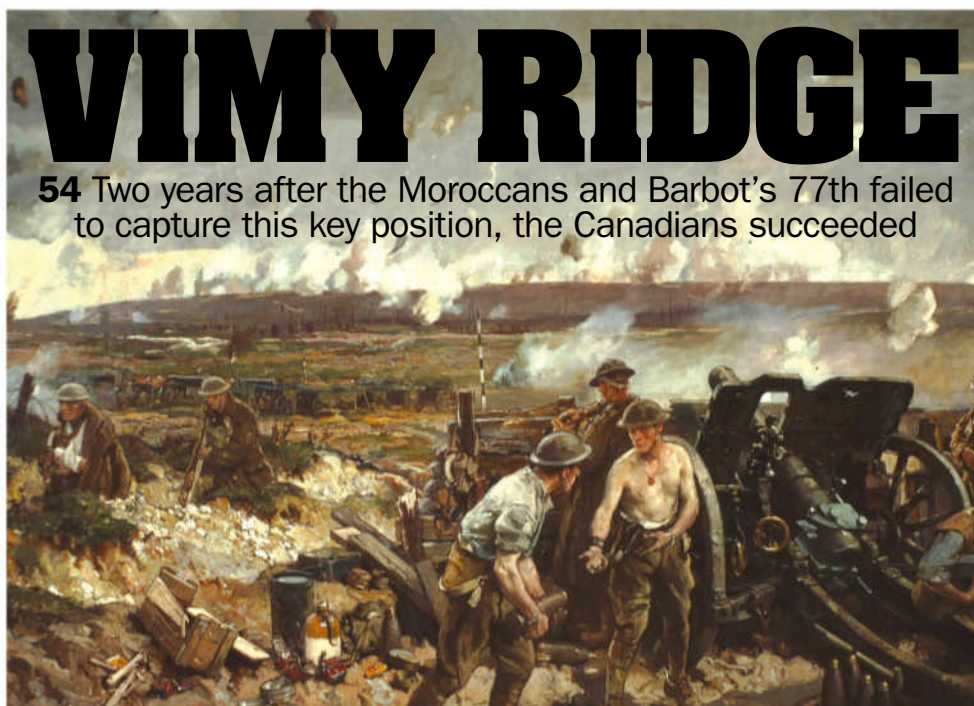
SPECIAL FORCES BERLIN

PART II

COLD WAR VIGIL & AN EVER-CHANGING MISSION

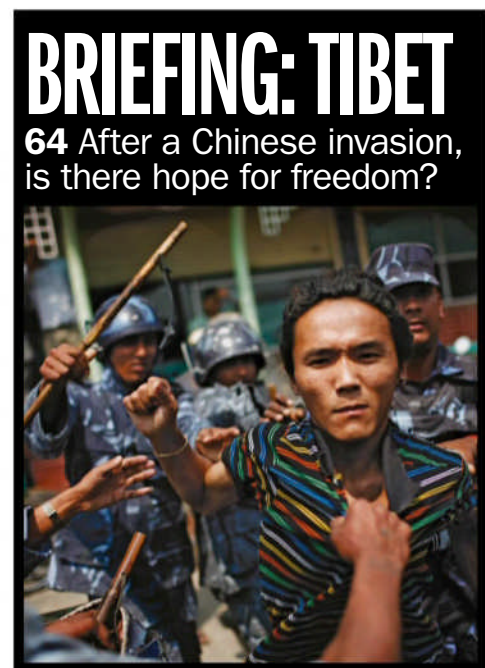
72 Always on alert for WWIII, this elite division sought to stop the Soviets... from both sides of the Wall

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Civil War pistol
Used by a cross-dressing Parliamentarian



VIMY RIDGE

54 Two years after the Moroccans and Barbot's 77th failed to capture this key position, the Canadians succeeded



BRIEFING: TIBET

64 After a Chinese invasion, is there hope for freedom?



A photograph of a Centurion tank in a desert trench during the Yom Kippur War. The tank is positioned in a shallow, earthen trench, with its main gun barrel extending horizontally across the upper left portion of the frame. The background is a vast, hazy desert landscape under a bright sky. The tank's turret and hull are visible, partially obscured by the trench walls and some dry brush in the foreground.

WARⁱⁿ **FOCUS**

INTO THE VALLEY OF TEARS

Taken: c. 1973

A Centurion tank rushes into action during the Yom Kippur War, which saw an Arab coalition attack Israeli forces, mainly in the Sinai Peninsula bordering Egypt and The Golan Heights bordering Syria. One of the critical and most devastating battles during the war occurred in the Golan Heights area, where hundreds of Syrian tanks were destroyed by outnumbered Israeli defenders.





WARⁱⁿ **FOCUS**

SPECIAL HEIR SERVICE

Taken: c. March, 1983

Prince Charles and Princess Diana pose with B Squadron, 22 SAS Regiment, after exercises designed to prepare the royal couple for hostage rescue scenarios. During the training, which included live ammunition, the Princess's hair was reportedly set alight by the stray ember of a detonating flash-bang grenade.



WAR_{in}
FOCUS
URGENT EVAC

Taken: c.1966

American Marines recover the body of their squad leader, Leland Hammond, during Operation Prairie in the Vietnamese demilitarised zone. To the right of the picture, taken by famous photojournalist Larry Burrows, is Catherine LeRoy, another prolific combat photographer. Between them, LeRoy and Burrows produced some of the most iconic and evocative images of the Vietnam War, while working for *Life* magazine. LeRoy was later injured in the field and captured by NVA troops, whom she persuaded to pose for her – one of her shots made the cover of *Life*.







WARⁱⁿ **FOCUS**

G.I. JOEY

Taken: c. 1942

A US soldier poses with his pet kangaroo at an Allied base. More than 1 million servicemen travelled through Australia during WWII en route to or from the Pacific theatre, and though this boosted the local economy immensely, it also caused significant tension. The Battle of Brisbane, in November 1942, was a full-scale riot involving US and Australian personnel.



TIMELINE OF THE...

ANGLO-AFGHAN

Between 1839-1919, the British Empire fought three bloody, but arguably futile, campaigns in Afghanistan to extend their control from the Indian Raj

SECOND ANGLO-AFGHAN WAR

In a similar attempt to curtail Russian influence, the viceroy of India sends another expedition into Afghanistan. Kabul is occupied twice and the country becomes a British 'protectorate'.

March 1839-1842

FIRST ANGLO-AFGHAN WAR

The British entered Afghanistan ostensibly to intervene in a succession dispute between two competing rulers for the Afghan throne, but also to diminish Russian influence over the country.

Left: Dost Mohammad Khan, emir of Afghanistan, is temporarily deposed by the British and replaced with a puppet ruler, but the Afghan victory in 1842 leads to his restoration

BATTLE OF GHAZNI

Lieutenant General Sir John Keane leads imperial Bombay and Bengal armies to successfully capture the Afghan city of Ghazni (Ghuznee). It is a victorious beginning to a disastrous war.

Below: A British-Indian force attacks Ghazni fort. Sappers and miners blow up the gate with stockpiles of gunpowder despite Afghan defensive fire



6-13 January 1842

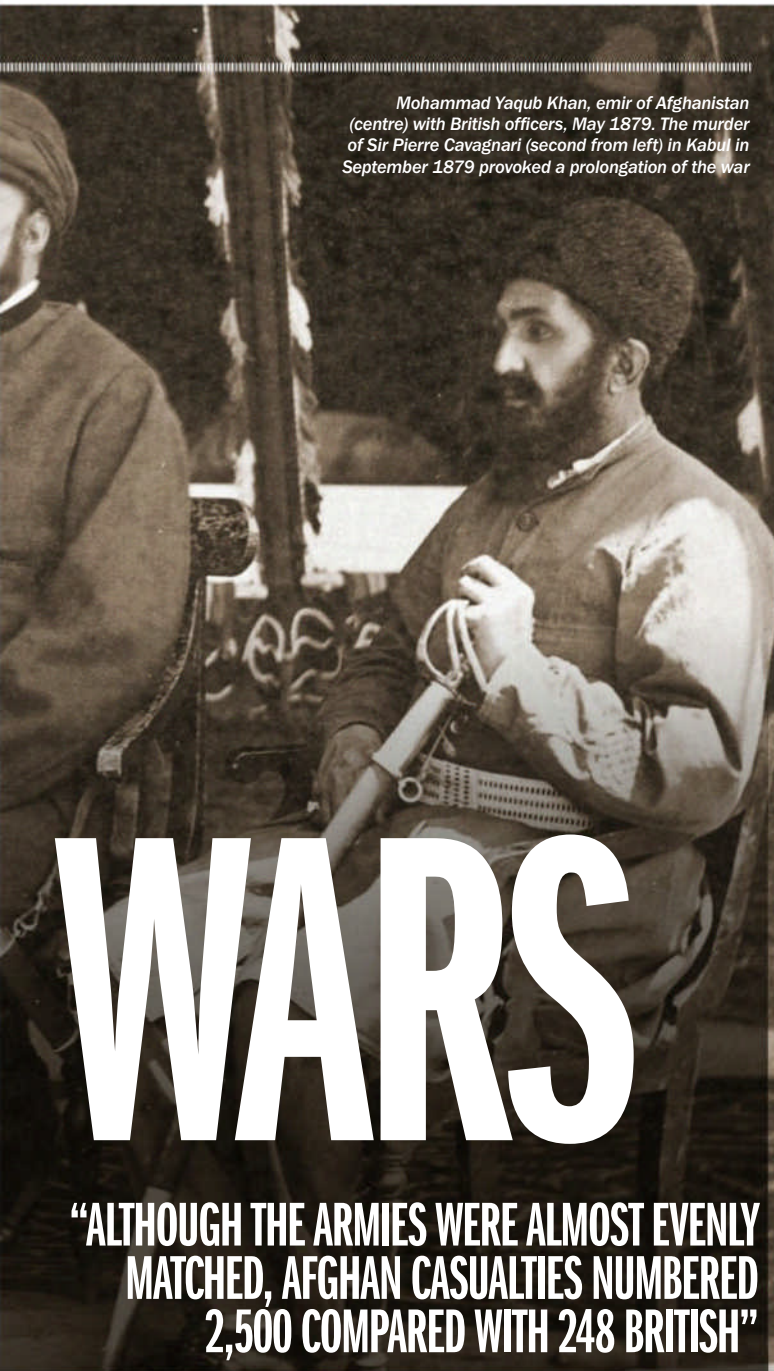
RETREAT FROM KABUL

On 6 January 1842, 4,500 British and Indian soldiers plus 12,000 camp followers march out of Kabul, but most are killed by bands of Afghan fighters before they reach the safe outpost at Jalalabad.

Afghan forces attacking retreating British-Indian troops during the retreat from Kabul. It is arguably the greatest British defeat until the fall of Singapore in 1942



1878-1880



Mohammad Yaqub Khan, emir of Afghanistan (centre) with British officers, May 1879. The murder of Sir Pierre Cavagnari (second from left) in Kabul in September 1879 provoked a prolongation of the war

WARS

“ALTHOUGH THE ARMIES WERE ALMOST EVENLY MATCHED, AFGHAN CASUALTIES NUMBERED 2,500 COMPARED WITH 248 BRITISH”



BATTLE OF KANDAHAR

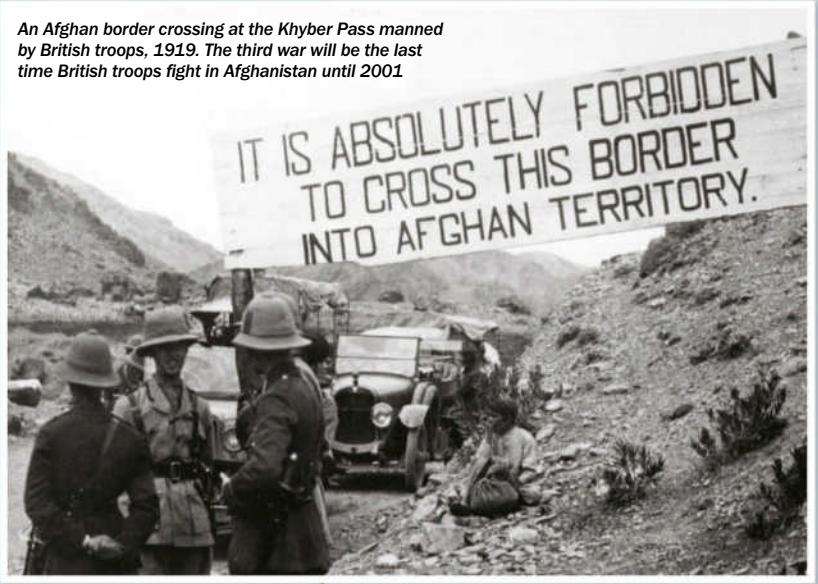
The final major battle of the Second Anglo-Afghan War is a British victory. Although the armies are almost evenly matched, Afghan casualties number 2,500 compared with 248 British.

Left: The 92nd Highlanders storming Gundi Mulla Sahibdad. Frederick Roberts, who will later play a large part in the Second Boer War, wins the Battle of Kandahar

THIRD ANGLO-AFGHAN WAR

In the aftermath of WWI, the Afghan king declares total independence from Britain. A series of skirmishes results in a tactical British victory but Afghanistan's independence is recognised.

An Afghan border crossing at the Khyber Pass manned by British troops, 1919. The third war will be the last time British troops fight in Afghanistan until 2001



27 July 1880

1 September 1880

6 May-8 August 1919

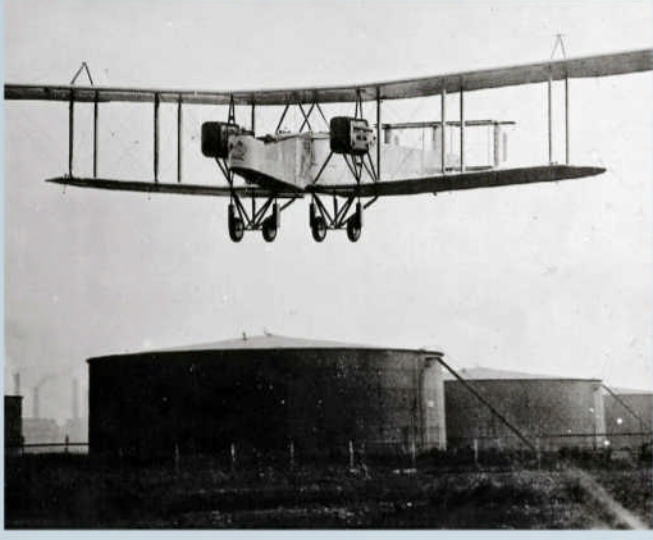
24 May 1919

BATTLE OF MAIWAND

An Afghan force under Ayub Khan defeats two brigades of British and Indian troops commanded by Brigadier General George Burrows. In desperate fighting, almost 1,000 imperial troops are killed compared to 3,000 Afghans.



Above: Maiwand was an unprecedented defeat for the British, fighting what was perceived to be an inferior opponent



BOMBING OF KABUL

The first aerial bombing of the Afghan capital ironically takes place on Britain's 'Empire Day'. A Handley-Page bomber drops 20 bombs over government and palatial buildings, which starts some small fires.

Left: A Handley Page Type O/400. First flown in 1915, the bomber was among the largest aircraft in the world in 1919 and known as 'bloody paralyzers'

Images: Alamy, Getty

FLASHPOINTS OF THE WARS

The British Empire's repeated invasions were mainly concentrated around Kabul and the frontier between Afghanistan and what is now Pakistan



1 SIEGE OF JALALABAD

12 NOVEMBER 1841 – 13 APRIL 1842 **JALALABAD, AFGHANISTAN**

This successful British defence slightly restores imperial honour after the disasters of Kabul and the subsequent retreat. For five months the garrison holds out despite poor defences and Afghan attacks

“FOR FIVE MONTHS THE GARRISON HOLDS OUT DESPITE POOR DEFENCES AND AFGHAN ATTACKS”

Left: British troops (right) charge the Afghan line. 1,500 Anglo-Indian soldiers held off the attacks of 5,000 Afghan warriors for five months

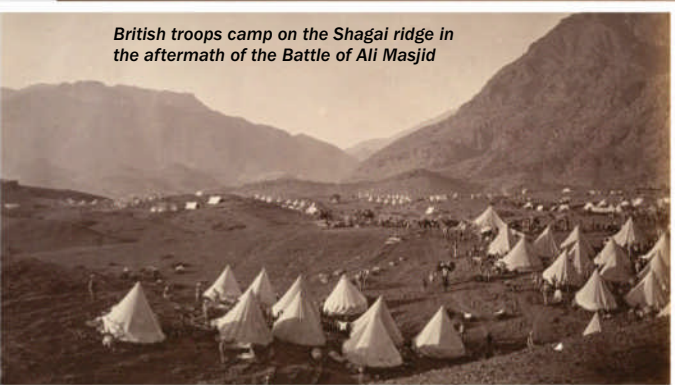
2 KABUL EXPEDITION

AUGUST-OCTOBER 1842 **KABUL, AFGHANISTAN**

An Anglo-Indian 'Army of Retribution' takes revenge against the Afghans for the massacres of early 1842. In areas known to have had a part in the killings of imperial troops, whole populations are slaughtered and villages destroyed.

AFGHANISTAN

British troops camp on the Shagai ridge in the aftermath of the Battle of Ali Masjid



Left: Afghan guns abandoned during the retreat from Ali Masjid. Despite being an undeveloped country Afghanistan often had good artillery to fight the British

6

7

3 BATTLE OF ALI MASJID

21 NOVEMBER 1878 **WESTERN END OF THE KHYBER PASS, AFGHANISTAN**

Ali Masjid is the opening battle of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, where predominately Indian troops successfully attack an Afghan fort for almost four hours. The Afghan garrison withdraws during the following night.

4 BATTLE OF PEIWAR KOTAL

28-29 NOVEMBER 1878 **KURRAM VALLEY, PAKISTAN**

In order to advance into Afghanistan, the British must advance on the Peiwar Kotal pass. Despite heavy Afghan fire from above, imperial troops attack at dawn and clear the pass.

Right: Photograph of a view of the route taken by front attack of Peiwar Kotal





Left: British Infantry make their last stand at the Battle of Maiwand

5 SIEGE OF THE BRITISH RESIDENCY IN KABUL

3 SEPTEMBER 1879 **KABUL, AFGHANISTAN**

A British 'mission' is established in Kabul consisting of 75 soldiers led by Major Sir Pierre Cavagnari, but Afghan soldiers and civilians attack the residency without warning. After hours of ferocious fighting, most of the mission is dead along with approximately 600 Afghans.

6 BATTLE OF MAIWAND

27 JULY 1880 **MAIWAND, AFGHANISTAN**

Two brigades of Imperial troops are defeated by 25,000 Afghan warriors. 128 years later, British soldiers serving in Helmand discover their Victorian predecessors' Martini-Henry rifles that were discarded after the battle.

RETREAT FROM KABUL

6-13 JANUARY 1842
KABUL-JALALABAD ROAD,
NEAR GANDAMAK, AFGHANISTAN

BATTLE OF KAM DAKKA

22 APRIL 1879
KAM DAKKA,
NANGRAHAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

AFGHAN CAPTURE OF BAGH

3 MAY 1919
BAGH

BATTLE OF GANDAMAK

13 JANUARY 1842
GANDAMAK, AFGHANISTAN

SIEGE OF KAHUN

1841
KAHUN, AFGHANISTAN

SECOND BATTLE OF BAGH

YEARS: 11 MAY 1919

BATTLE OF AHMED KHEL

19 APRIL 1880
AHMED KHEL, AFGHANISTAN

BATTLE OF FUTTEHABAD

2 APRIL 1879
SOUTH WEST OF JALALABAD, AFGHANISTAN

SIEGE OF THALL

JUNE 1919 THALL, PAKISTAN

"128 YEARS LATER, BRITISH SOLDIERS SERVING IN HELMAND DISCOVER THEIR VICTORIAN PREDECESSORS' MARTINI-HENRY RIFLES THAT WERE DISCARDED AFTER THE BATTLE"

BATTLE OF GHAZNI

23 JULY 1839
GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN

SIEGE OF THE SHERPUR CANTONMENT

15-23 DECEMBER 1879
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

7 BATTLE OF KANDAHAR

1 SEPTEMBER 1880 **KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN**

An imperial force of 11,000 soldiers fights a 13,000-strong Afghan force. The British meticulously bombard Afghan resistance followed by heavy close combat. The Afghans eventually abandon their lines.

BATTLE OF CHAR ASIAB

6 OCTOBER 1879
CHAR ASIAB, AFGHANISTAN

RAF BOMBING OF KABUL

24 MAY 1919

SECOND BATTLE OF CHARASIAB

25 APRIL 1880

RAF BOMBING OF DACCA

9 MAY 1919
DACCA, AFGHANISTAN

BATTLE OF 'STONEHENGE RIDGE'

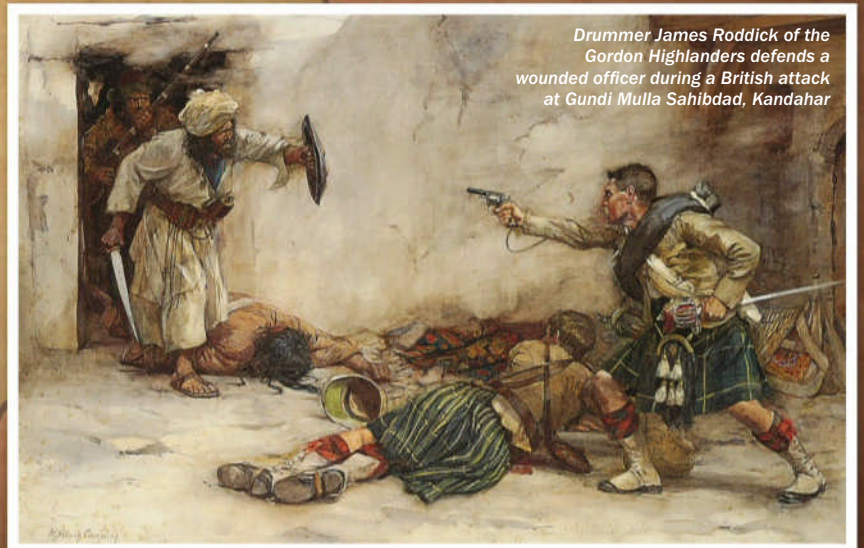
MAY 1919

PAKISTAN

8 RAF AIR CAMPAIGN

1919 **AFGHANISTAN**

Bomber aircraft give the British a great advantage during the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Dacca and Jalalabad are bombed, and a raid on Kabul forces the Afghan government to seek an armistice. For the first time in military history, airpower is a decisive factor.



Drummer James Roddick of the Gordon Highlanders defends a wounded officer during a British attack at Gundi Mulla Sahibdad, Kandahar

IN THE RANKS

Soldiers who fought during the Anglo-Afghan Wars were of diverse backgrounds, ranging from rank-and-file regulars, to irregular and tribal fighters

In 1839, the British soldiers who invaded Afghanistan would look and be armed in almost an identical fashion to their predecessors at Waterloo. However, by 1878 they

had exchanged the scarlet uniform for khaki and swapped smoothbore muskets for a breech-loading rifle. For the average Afghan tribesman, however, little changed during these intervening years.

66TH (BERKSHIRE) REGIMENT OF FOOT IN 1880

THE INFANTRYMAN WAS THE BACKBONE OF THE BRITISH ARMY, BEARING THE BRUNT OF MOST BATTLES FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

A soldier in the 66th was typical of the British infantryman at the time of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80). He was armed with the .577/450 single-shot breech-loading Martini-Henry rifle that had first entered service in 1871. Along with his rifle, he would also be armed with a triangular socket bayonet for close-quarter combat, although sergeants would be issued with a sword bayonet.

His 1871 Valise Pattern equipment would primarily consist of a buff coloured belt with two 20-round

ammunition pouches, a 30-round ball-bag, a bayonet frog, haversack for his rations and a waterbottle – the weight on the belt was supported by shoulder straps.

The uniform of a soldier in Afghanistan in this period would include a cloth-covered helmet; khaki-dyed white drill frock; trousers with brown puttees rolled upwards from the ankles; and a pair of ankle boots.

The Army Enlistment Act of 1870 allowed soldiers to initially enlist for 12 years: the first six years being with the regular army and the remainder with the part-time reserves.

44TH (EAST ESSEX) REGIMENT OF FOOT IN 1842

OFTEN CLAD IN SCARLET, AND ARMED WITH MUSKETS, THE BRITISH INFANTRYMEN OF THE FIRST ANGLo-AFGHAN WAR WERE LITTLE CHANGED SINCE WATERLOO

In contrast to his later counterparts of the 1870s/1880s, the British infantryman of 1839 had changed little since the time of the Battle of Waterloo. Mostly clothed in scarlet uniforms reminiscent of the Napoleonic Wars and armed with a smoothbore flintlock musket, a soldier of the 44th Regiment of Foot would have looked entirely familiar to Napoleon on that fateful day in 1815. The 44th would be wiped out during the disastrous retreat from Kabul in 1842.



The Last Stand of the 44th East Essex Regiment at Gandamak by Richard Simkin

After swapping the scarlet uniform from Waterloo, the British donned new khaki gear

AFGHAN TRIBESMEN C.1841

ALTHOUGH MUCH CHANGED FOR BRITISH AND INDIAN TROOPS BETWEEN 1839 AND 1878, AFGHAN TRIBESMEN REMAINED LARGELY THE SAME

The majority of Afghan forces sent to fight the British were not trained regular troops, rather they were irregular tribal fighters who took up arms in times of war. They came from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and did not always see eye to eye. However, they were formidable in battle and many a British and Indian soldier met a grizzly end at their hands. They characteristically carried smoothbore firearms, such as the jezail, or edged weapons such as the pesh-kabz.



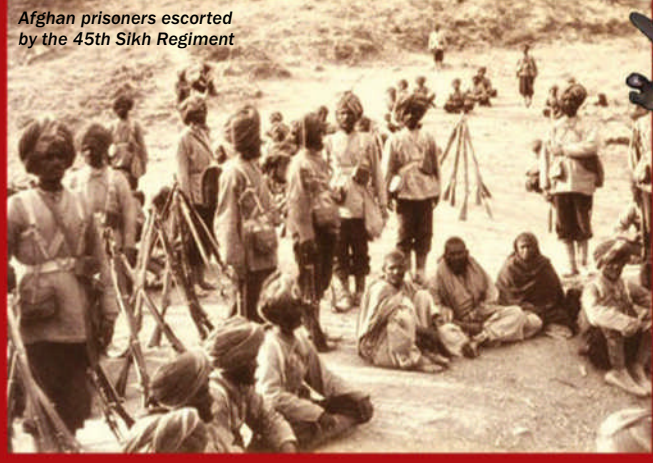
Left: A group of mountain tribesmen, most likely Afghan Pashtuns from the Second Anglo-Afghan War

“MANY A BRITISH AND INDIAN SOLDIER MET A GRIZZLY END AT THEIR HANDS”

45TH (RATTRAY’S SIKH) BENGAL NATIVE INFANTRY IN 1878

CONSIDERED AMONG THE BEST, THE 45TH SIKHS SAW MUCH SERVICE IN AFGHANISTAN & ON THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER

Raised by Captain Thomas Rattray in 1856 as the Bengal Military Police Battalion, this regiment was to undergo a number of name changes during its existence. However, by the time of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, it was officially known as the 45th (Rattray’s Sikh) Bengal Native Infantry. Following the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, the British decided to arm its Indian troops with older weapons. Thus, when British troops received the new Martini-Henry, the 45th retained their older rifles.



Afghan prisoners escorted by the 45th Sikh Regiment



Left: Many of the Afghan forces were untrained soldiers who didn’t always get along with their comrades

HEROES AND COMMANDERS

Between 1839 and 1919, Britain fought three wars against Afghanistan. The campaigns produced a mix of commanders on both sides who were ruthlessly efficient and outstandingly heroic

Left: Major-General Frederick Sleigh Roberts, 1st Earl Roberts. Known as 'Lord Roberts of Kabul and Kandahar'

FREDERICK ROBERTS

YEARS ACTIVE: 1851-1904 **ALLEGIANCE:** BRITISH INDIAN ARMY

Major-General Frederick Roberts was an experienced British soldier in his 40s during the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Born in India, Roberts returned to Britain where he received an education at Eton in 1850, he passed out ninth in his class in 1851, being commissioned into the Bengal Artillery.

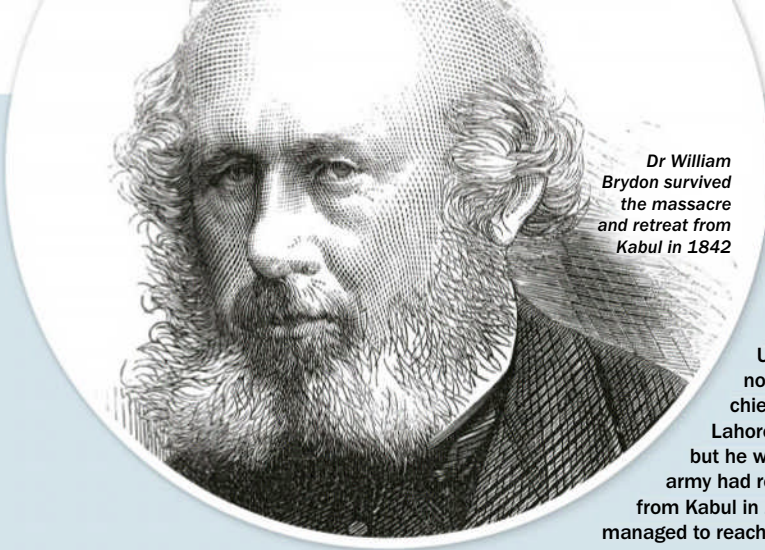
Returning to India, Roberts was posted to Peshawar where he became deputy assistant quartermaster-general in 1856. While at Peshawar, Roberts heard of the mutinies at Meerut and Delhi, after which he was appointed to the staff of Neville Chamberlain's mobile column. He would volunteer for the siege of Delhi in June 1857, and after the city fell in September he joined the staff of Sir Colin Campbell's force for the relief of Lucknow. It would be during the Indian Mutiny in 1858 that he performed gallant acts resulting in the award of a Victoria Cross.

Due to ill health, Roberts returned to Britain but would be back in India by 1859, joining the quartermaster-general's department where he would mix with senior military figures. He was promoted to captain and given a brevet majority in 1860, and in 1863 he served in the expedition to Abyssinia, although he saw no action.

He would, however, be recognised as a promising officer and was promoted to colonel in 1875, after which he became quartermaster-general of India, with the temporary rank of major-general.

At the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, Roberts was appointed to command the Kurram column. During the conflict, Roberts led more than 10,000 men over 300 miles in order to relieve the British garrison at Kandahar; a feat for which he later became known as 'Lord Roberts of Kabul and Kandahar'.





Dr William Brydon survived the massacre and retreat from Kabul in 1842

DR WILLIAM BRYDON

YEARS ACTIVE: 1835-1859

ALLEGIANCE: BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY ARMY

Dr William Brydon was a surgeon with the East India Company Army, having entered the service in 1835 following his medical studies at University College, London and the University of Edinburgh. His early military service saw him working in various regiments in the north-western provinces of India, but later was involved in escort duties for the commander-in-chief, Sir Henry Fane, and for the governor-general, Lord Auckland, to the court of Ranjit Singh at Lahore. When the First Anglo-Afghan War broke out, Brydon was posted to the 5th Native Infantry, but he would remain with the force left to occupy Afghanistan after the majority of the invasion army had returned to India. He is best remembered today for his actions during the disastrous retreat from Kabul in 1842, which saw the destruction of Elphinstone's army; Brydon survived the massacre and managed to reach Jalalabad. He is immortalised in *The Remnants of an Army* by Lady Butler.

SHAH SHUJA DURRANI

YEARS ACTIVE: 1803-1842

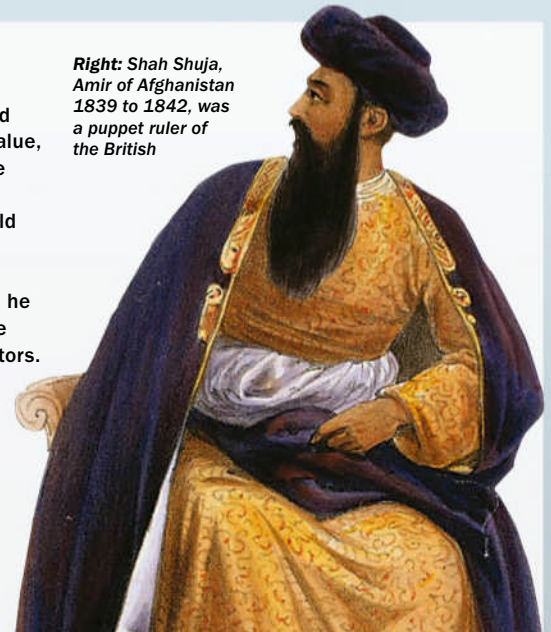
ALLEGIANCE: AMIR OF AFGHANISTAN, UNDER BRITISH INFLUENCE

Born in 1786, Shah Shuja had escaped arrest in 1800, following his brother's capture and blinding by long-standing enemies. He then wandered around the mountains of Afghanistan until he was able to seize power at Kabul and become the Amir of the country in 1803. However, he would be defeated on

the battlefield by Shah Mahmoud, his half-brother, at the Battle of Nimla in 1809.

Fleeing Afghanistan, Shuja again wandered northern India, losing everything he had of value, including the Koh-i-Nur diamond. In 1816, he accepted an offer of asylum from the British East India Company in Ludhiana, but he would subsequently make three failed attempts to regain his throne at Kabul. His luck would change in 1839 when, backed by the British, he finally returned to Kabul as Amir, although he would be a mere puppet ruler of his benefactors. Shah Shuja was assassinated by his godson on 5 April 1842.

Right: Shah Shuja, Amir of Afghanistan 1839 to 1842, was a puppet ruler of the British



“SHUJA AGAIN WANDERED NORTHERN INDIA, LOSING EVERYTHING HE HAD OF VALUE, INCLUDING THE KOH-I-NUR DIAMOND”

Left: Sher Ali Khan, Amir of Afghanistan until forced to flee by the British in 1879

SIR GEORGE POLLOCK

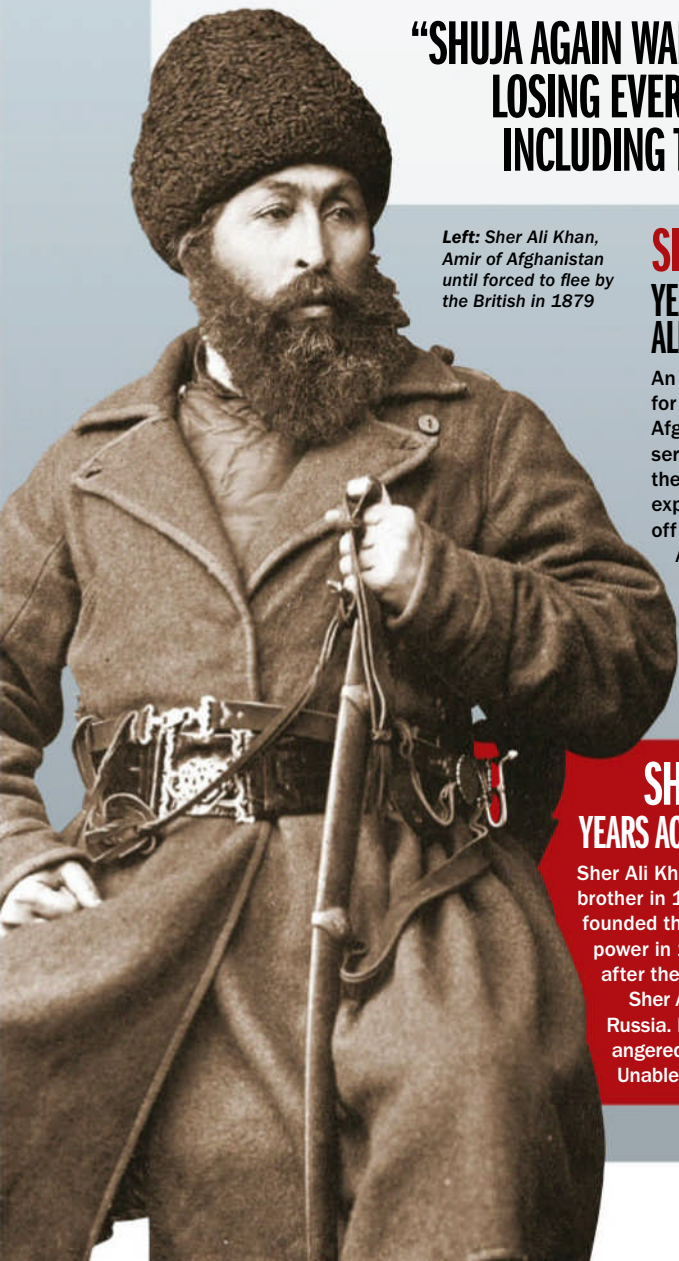
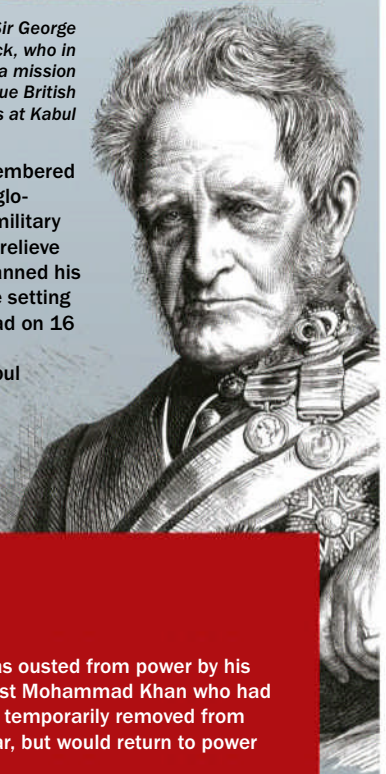
YEARS ACTIVE: 1801-1846

ALLEGIANCE: BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY ARMY

An officer of the British East India Company, Sir George Pollock is remembered for being a highly efficient yet ruthless soldier. By the time the First Anglo-Afghan War had begun, he had already accumulated over 30 years of military service in India and would be given command of a force with orders to relieve the besieged British garrison at Jalalabad. Pollock characteristically planned his expedition carefully, right down to the minute issues of logistics, before setting off from Peshawar, forcing his way up the Khyber and relieving Jalalabad on 16 April 1842.

Later, after yet more meticulous planning, he led his force to Kabul in order to free British hostages, inflicting a defeat on the Afghan general Akbar Khan in the Tezin Pass before finally taking the Afghan capital on 16 September. He would subsequently withdraw from Afghanistan, but not until he had burned much of Kabul and destroyed the village of Istalif.

Right: Sir George Pollock, who in 1842 led a mission to rescue British hostages at Kabul



SHER ALI KHAN

YEARS ACTIVE: 1863-1879 **ALLEGIANCE:** AMIR OF AFGHANISTAN

Sher Ali Khan was the Amir of Afghanistan from 1863 to 1879, although he was ousted from power by his brother in 1866 and did not regain his throne until 1868. He was the son of Dost Mohammad Khan who had founded the Barakzai dynasty of Afghan rulers. Sher Ali's father had also been temporarily removed from power in 1839 following the British invasion during the First Anglo-Afghan War, but would return to power after the assassination of Shah Shuja in 1842.

Sher Ali's second reign was blighted by the so-called Great Game, the Victorian cold war between Britain and Russia. Both powers tried to influence the Afghan Amir but Sher Ali attempted to remain neutral. This ultimately angered the British, who invaded Afghanistan in 1878 in what became known as the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Unable to stop the advance of British troops, Sher Ali fled Kabul and died the following year.

RETREAT FROM KABUL

The British Empire's withdrawal from the Afghan capital in 1842 was the most bloody imperial disaster of the Victorian era, with tens of thousands dying in the harsh terrain

An Anglo-Indian army had been based in Kabul since August 1839 with the aim of keeping a pro-British puppet ruler on the Afghan throne. As the occupying force settled into the capital, Afghan discontent grew. The incompetent Major General William Elphinstone commanded the imperial force

as Afghan tribesmen repeatedly attacked the British and deprived them of supplies.

Between November and December 1841, British officers were murdered and an uprising broke out in Kabul. Elphinstone failed to respond to the crisis and by January 1842, the stage was set for a humiliating withdrawal back to India that would end in disaster.

"AFGHAN TRIBESMEN REPEATEDLY ATTACKED THE BRITISH AND DEPRIVED THEM OF SUPPLIES"

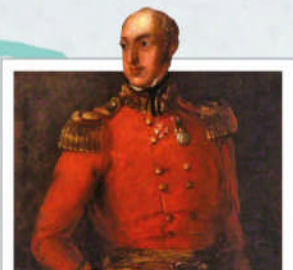
★ THE IMPERIAL GARRISON LEAVES THE CITY KABUL

On 6 January 1842, the Anglo-Indian garrison of 4,500 soldiers (including fewer than 700 British troops) leaves Kabul along with 12,000 women, children, camp followers and servants. They are promised safe conduct by the Afghans on the condition that most of the British artillery is surrendered and hostages taken.



★ AKBAR KHAN PRESENTS DEMANDS BOOTHAK

At Boothak, the leader of the Afghan forces, Wazir Akbar Khan, extorts large amounts of money and more hostages from the British to ensure a safer passage. One of his main conditions is that the British leave Jalalabad and withdraw to India.



★ ELPHINSTONE AND SHELTON SURRENDER JAGDALAK

On the evening of 11 January, Akbar Khan invites Elphinstone and Shelton to negotiate but in the subsequent meeting they are not allowed to leave and are forced to surrender. Brigadier General Thomas Anquetil now commands the remaining column.

★ AKBAR KHAN PRESENTS MORE DEMANDS HUFT KOTUL PASS

After the Khoord Kabul massacre, Akbar Khan makes demands for the remaining married officers with their families to become hostages. At the same time, the column presses on and is continuously attacked by tribesmen from 9-11 January.

★ A BROKEN PROMISE OUTSIDE KABUL

The retreating column is attacked the moment it leaves the Kabul cantonments. The army manages to march six miles on the first day, but the night is spent without tents or cover and many die of the cold.

★ KHOORD KABUL PASS

KHOORD KABUL

★ BRIGADIER-GENERAL SHELTON COUNTERATTACKS BYGRAM

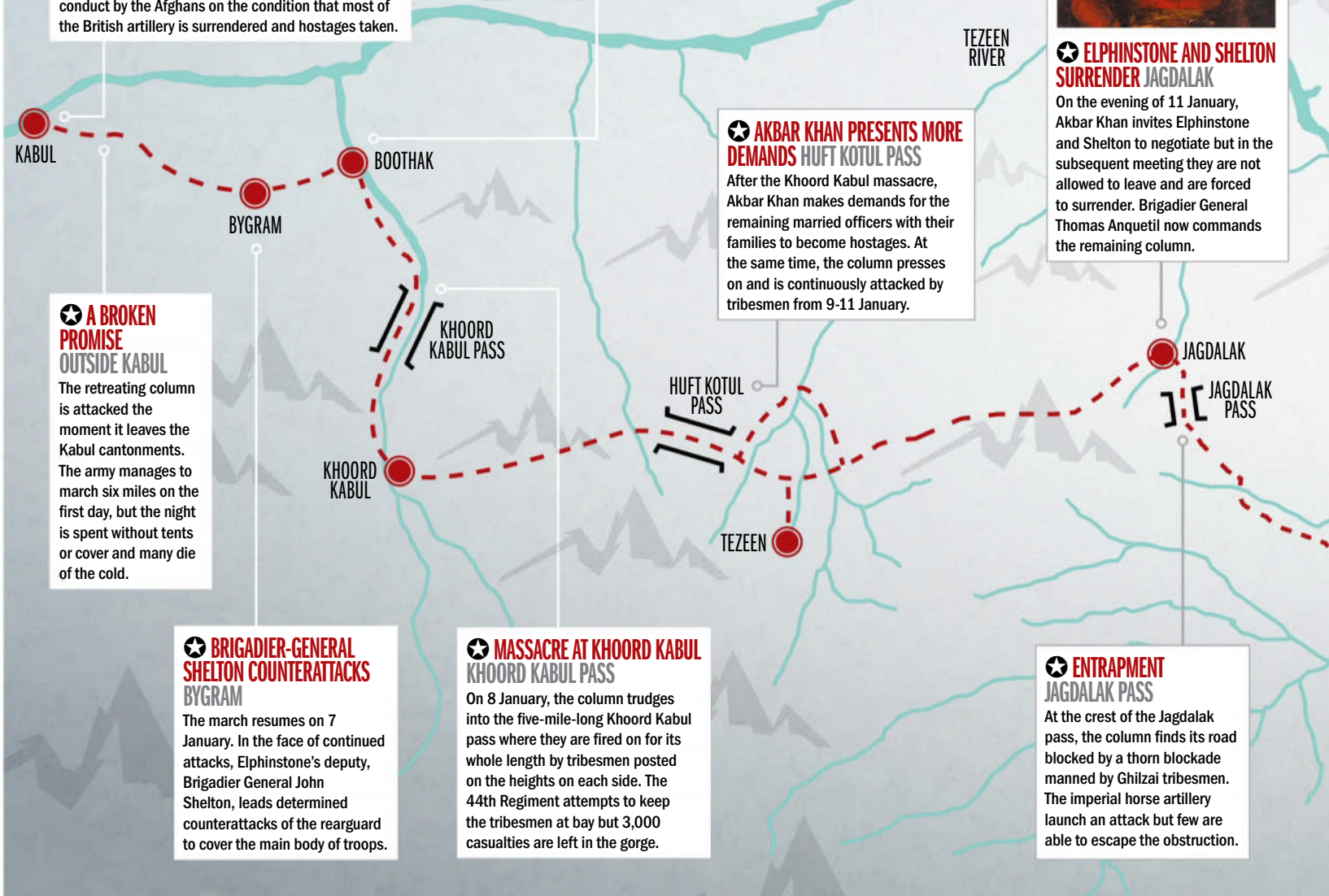
The march resumes on 7 January. In the face of continued attacks, Elphinstone's deputy, Brigadier General John Shelton, leads determined counterattacks of the rearguard to cover the main body of troops.

★ MASSACRE AT KHOORD KABUL KHOORD KABUL PASS

On 8 January, the column trudges into the five-mile-long Khoord Kabul pass where they are fired on for its whole length by tribesmen posted on the heights on each side. The 44th Regiment attempts to keep the tribesmen at bay but 3,000 casualties are left in the gorge.

★ ENTRAPMENT JAGDALAK PASS

At the crest of the Jagdalak pass, the column finds its road blocked by a thorn blockade manned by Ghilzai tribesmen. The imperial horse artillery launch an attack but few are able to escape the obstruction.



WILLIAM BRYDON: THE LUCKY SURGEON

BRYDON WAS CATAPULTED INTO VICTORIAN HISTORY SIMPLY BY BEING THE 'SOLE SURVIVOR' OF THE RETREAT FROM KABUL

Born in London, 1811, William Brydon had studied medicine and joined the East India Company as an assistant surgeon. When war broke out in 1839, Brydon was posted to the Bengal Army and had remained with the army of occupation in Kabul.

During the infamous retreat, Brydon had witnessed endless massacres of the British column by Afghan fighters but somehow got through the deadly gorges and snowstorms with five other officers. When this party was only four miles short of Jalalabad, his companions were killed and Brydon continued alone on horseback. His sole arrival at the safe outpost of Jalalabad shocked the British garrison. More than 16,000 of his companions had not returned and

Brydon himself was in a bad way. He had wounds to the knee and left hand and received a near-fatal blow to the head from an Afghan knife. He only escaped death by storing a copy of *Blackwood's Magazine* under his forage cap, which cushioned the blow.

Brydon was promoted to surgeon and continued to serve in India. He survived another severe wound at the Siege of Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny in 1857 before eventually dying in Scotland in 1873. Despite his fame, Brydon was not the 'sole survivor' of the retreat as several Europeans were taken prisoner and survived, while small numbers of Indian soldiers trickled to safety in the weeks after the retreat.



Above: Remnants of an Army by Lady Elizabeth Butler was painted in 1879 and depicts an exhausted William Brydon arriving at Jalalabad. It became one of the most famous imperial paintings of the Victorian era

“HIS SOLE ARRIVAL AT THE SAFE OUTPOST OF JALALABAD SHOCKED THE BRITISH GARRISON. OVER 16,000 OF HIS COMPANIONS HAD NOT RETURNED AND BRYDON HIMSELF WAS IN A BAD WAY”



Left: The last stand of the 44th (East Essex) Regiment of Foot at Gandamak. Most were killed except Captain Soutar (front, second from right) who wrapped the regimental colours around his body

THE LAST STAND GANDAMAK

On the morning of 13 January, 20 officers and 45 European soldiers of the 44th Regiment are surrounded on a hillock. The soldiers do not believe Afghan offers of clemency and a desperate fight ensues. Most are killed except three or four who are captured, and six mounted officers escape. However, five of these are murdered along the road.

A GRIM RESULT JALALABAD

During the afternoon of 13 January, assistant surgeon William Brydon arrives at the British garrison at Jalalabad. Although some Indian soldiers eventually arrive weeks later, the outcome is clear: almost the entire column of 16,500 people have been killed or captured.

GANDAMAK

SOURKAB RIVER

FUTTEHABAD

KABUL RIVER

JALALABAD

Right: Afghan foot soldiers in 1841. Bands of irregular tribesman in Afghanistan annihilated the British Army - one of the most feared forces in the world at the time



THE DISASTER AT MAIWAND

How did a well-equipped Anglo-Indian force become defeated by an army of poorly trained tribesmen?

Fought on 27 July 1880 during the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the Battle of Maiwand was an embarrassing defeat for the British Army. The action claimed, according to estimates at the time, 1,109 British and Indian casualties, of which 969 were killed. It saw the loss of the Queen's and Regimental Colours of the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment, which, coupled with the loss of the Colours of the 2/24th (2nd Warwickshire) Regiment at the Battle of Isandlwana the previous year, it is said, resulted in the decision for Colours to never be taken on the field again. But why did a well-trained Anglo-Indian force get defeated by an army of poorly trained tribesmen, and how much of a victory in reality was it for the Afghans?

On the day of the battle, the British fielded one infantry brigade and another of cavalry. The former, commanded by Brigadier-General George Burrows, comprised of the 66th Regiment of Foot, the 1st Bombay Native Infantry (Grenadiers) and the 30th Bombay Native Infantry (Jacob's Rifles). The latter, commanded by Brigadier-General Thomas Nuttall, included E Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry and the 3rd Sind Horse. Also present was a company of the Bengal Sappers and Miners. In short, the British fielded a formidable force of almost 2,500.

Afghan forces came under the command of Mohammad Ayub Khan, the former governor of Herat who had become the Amir of Afghanistan in October 1879. At his disposal were 6,000 regular Afghan infantry and 4,000 cavalry, all supported by 36 guns. In addition, Ayub Khan would be able to count on the support of 15,000 tribal and ghazi irregulars, who had joined him for the coming clash. The Afghans, therefore, had an impressive army of 25,000 men with which to confront the British.

The day before the battle, Burrows had received intelligence that his enemy was marching towards the Maiwand Pass and so the brigadier, determined to intercept them, started off early the following morning. It would be at around 10am that the first shots were fired when some mounted Afghans were seen and shot upon. Burrows next ordered his brigade to deploy for

battle, but he was unaware that he was actually facing Ayub Khan's main force of 25,000.

Unfortunately for Burrows, the Afghans were in possession of a number of modern Armstrong artillery pieces, which soon came into action against the British. The Royal Horse Artillery exchanged volleys and for the next three hours, both sides fired shell after shell at one another. Despite the power of the British artillery, and the following hail of rifle fire from the Indian and British infantry, the sheer number of fanatical ghazis eventually began to turn the flanks of Burrow's line. The left-flank ultimately gave way and the whole of the British line started to sweep away.

Many of the Indian troops were cut to pieces, while the British 66th Regiment attempted to withdraw, fighting clustered together with the remnants of the Grenadiers. A stand was made at the village of Khig, and when forced out, another was made in a nearby walled enclosure. The final stand of the 66th was made by two officers and nine men outside the village, where Bobby, the regiment's terrier, was wounded. The remainder of the brigade then retreated towards Kandahar with Afghan cavalry in pursuit. Burrows had lost the battle.

Sir Frederick Haines, the commander-in-chief, blamed his subordinates for failing to properly ascertain the size of the enemy force under Ayub Khan. He also blamed the Indian infantry for not standing firm and beginning a premature retirement. The British and Indian press pointed their fingers at Burrows and his lack of active service experience, rather than the troops themselves. Others argue fault for the disaster ultimately rests with those in authority in London and Calcutta for sanctioning a second invasion of Afghanistan, almost as if the lessons of the previous war had been ignored.

For Ayub Khan, the victory at Maiwand had come at huge cost, with his losses amounting to well over 3,000 men. Although he defeated the British at Maiwand they were not beaten, and on 1 September, a weakened Ayub Khan would be decisively defeated by Frederick Roberts at the Battle of Kandahar, effectively bringing the Second Anglo-Afghan War to an end.

Saving the Guns by Richard Caton Woodville, depicting E Battery, Royal Horse Artillery attempting escape from the Afghans



“THE BRITISH AND INDIAN PRESS POINTED THEIR FINGERS AT BURROWS AND HIS LACK OF ACTIVE SERVICE EXPERIENCE, RATHER THAN THE TROOPS THEMSELVES”

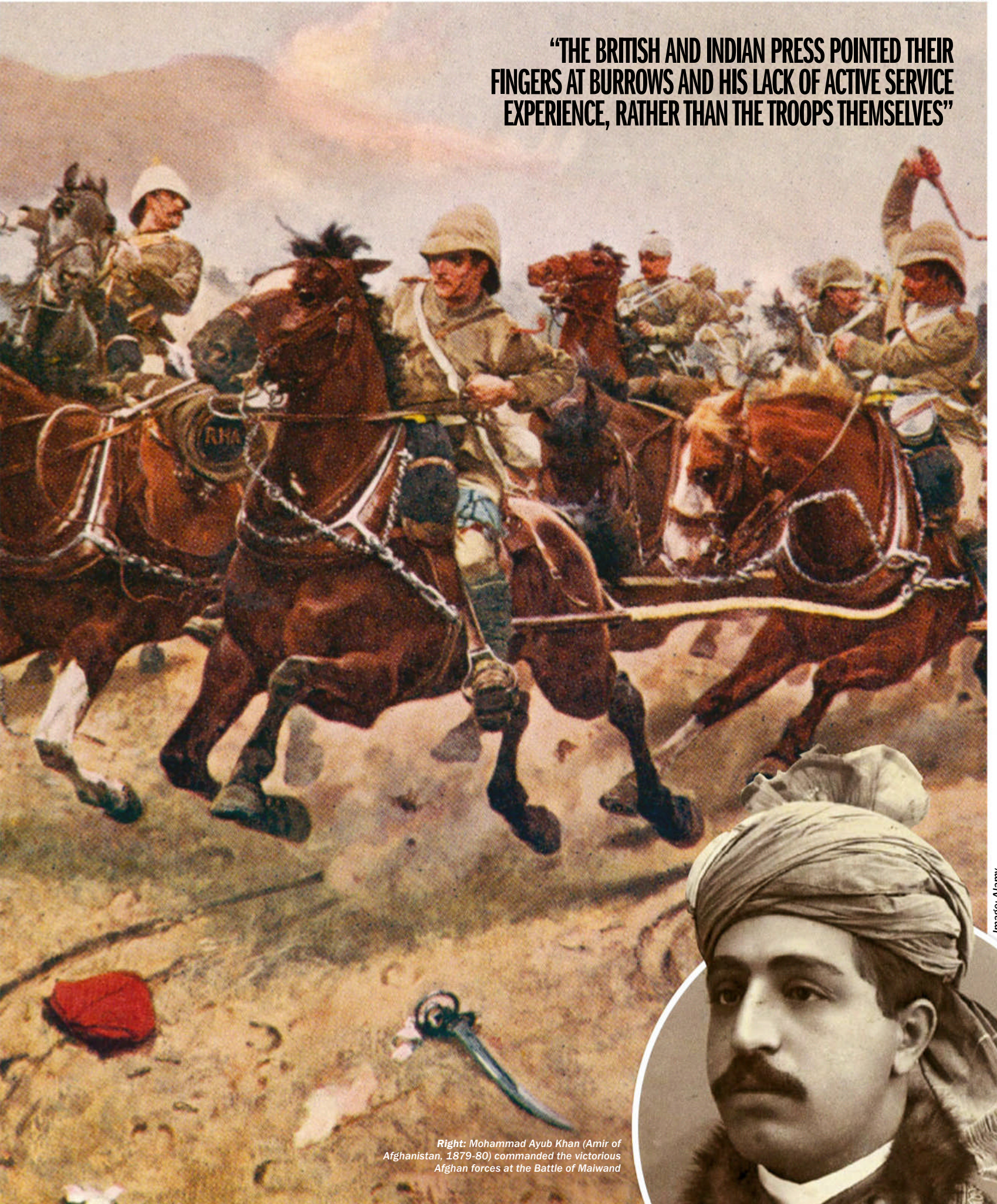


Image: Alamy

Right: Mohammad Ayub Khan (Amir of Afghanistan, 1879-80) commanded the victorious Afghan forces at the Battle of Maiwand

SAS



D-DAY MISSIONS

AS OPERATION OVERLORD BEGAN, THE SAS PARACHUTED INTO FRANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO CAUSE HAVOC, CUT RAILWAY LINES AND KILL GERMANS

WORDS GAVIN MORTIMER



As the British forces landed on the Normandy beaches, the SAS had already caused havoc for the Nazis across France

When David Stirling was granted permission to expand the SAS in September 1942, he appointed his brother, Bill, as commanding officer of the second regiment. Bill was the eldest of five children, and David's senior by four years. The siblings shared a similar military background (Scots Guards and commandos) but differed in personality.

One wartime SAS officer who knew them both, Anthony Greville-Bell, recalled: "I was very fond of Bill. He was a very deep, intelligent and well-read man. Bill was cleverer than David. [He] was more charismatic and more physical, the younger brother, and was outwardly very good at dealing with higher-ups and getting what he wanted. Bill was much quieter and more intellectual, and in terms of dealing with authority I think he was better than David."

Nonetheless, the brothers agreed on how the SAS should be deployed in any given theatre of war, and after David's capture in January 1943, Bill became more determined than ever to adhere to the principles outlined by his brother when, in 1941, he'd produced a plan for a special forces unit to operate behind enemy lines in North Africa.

In the summer of 1943, lieutenant colonel Bill Stirling had clashed with the HQ 15th Army Group about how 2SAS should be used in Italy, but that was just a foretaste of the bitter row that erupted the following March when the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) issued the SAS Brigade with its operational instructions for D-Day.

They tasked the SAS brigade (which now comprised 1SAS, 2SAS, two French regiments, 3 & 4, and a company of Belgian soldiers) to parachute into Normandy between the landing beaches and the German reserves 36 hours in advance of the main invasion fleet. Their job would be to prevent three panzer divisions of reserves from reaching the beaches once the invasion began.

Bill Stirling was aghast when he read the operational instructions. It was a suicide mission, and a type of warfare for which the SAS was not trained. Paddy Mayne, commanding officer of 1SAS, shared Stirling's sentiments but the big Irishman was better suited to fighting the enemy than his own top brass. "Paddy was useless with dealing with senior officers because if they did something to annoy him, he threatened to punch their noses," said Tony Greville-Bell.

In a strongly worded letter to SHAEF, Stirling expressed his grave misgivings about the operational instructions and demanded that the SAS operate in France as they had in the desert, in the principles set down by his brother.

Before Bill Stirling could send the letter, however, Lieutenant General Frederick 'Boy' Browning intervened on behalf of the SAS, advising the chief of staff, 21 Army Group, that it would be preferable if the SAS Brigade was dropped deeper into France to attack German lines of communication, train the resistance and waylay reinforcements en route to Normandy.

Stirling sent his letter nonetheless, in order to put on record his anger with what he considered as the constant misunderstanding of the SAS by the top brass. The letter infuriated many within SHAEF, but Stirling refused to retract his criticism.

Instead he resigned, and his decision to fall on his sword was not in vain. On 28 May, 21 Army Group issued an amended order for the SAS Brigade to replace the original order two months earlier. Now the SAS Brigade would carry out 43 missions in France, all but one (Titanic, involving a six-man party dropping into Normandy to spread confusion with dummy parachutes), entailing the insertion of SAS units deep behind enemy lines to attack the Germans.

"BILL STIRLING WAS AGHAST WHEN HE READ THE OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS. IT WAS A SUICIDE MISSION, AND A TYPE OF WARFARE FOR WHICH THE SAS WAS NOT TRAINED"

Left: Lieutenant colonel Brian Franks replaced Bill Stirling as CO of 2SAS and later parachuted into France to join the ill-fated Operation Loyton

Right: Paddy Mayne was one of the SAS originals, replacing David Stirling as CO of 1SAS following the latter's capture





OPERATION HOUNDSWORTH

CAUSING CHAOS ACROSS FRANCE, A SQUADRON CUT OFF VITAL GERMAN RESOURCE AND COMMUNICATION LINES

The first major mission into Occupied France was code-named Houndsworth, and involved A Squadron. Their task was to cut the railway lines between Lyon and Paris, train the numerous local groups of Maquis and generally make nuisances of themselves.

The boys in A Squadron considered themselves a cut above the rest of the SAS brigade. They were veterans of the desert, a few – like Johnny Cooper, Jeff Du Vivier, Reg Seekings and their commanding officer, Bill Fraser – were even ‘Originals’, among the 66 men recruited by David Stirling in 1941.

But it was one of the recent additions to the squadron, Captain Ian Wellsted, who got Operation Houndsworth underway on the night of 5 June. As the Allied invasion fleet sailed for the Normandy beaches, Wellsted and four others parachuted into the thickly-forested, rolling countryside of the Massif du Morvan, west of Dijon. Their task was to ensure the area was safe for the arrival of a second 20-strong SAS party under the command of Bill Fraser, which duly dropped without incident on 11 June.

By June 22, the remaining 46 men of A Squadron were safely inserted into the Morvan, with Fraser’s HQ camp established at Vieux Dun and a second base approximately ten miles south, not far from the village of Montsauche, under the command of Alex Muirhead and Ian Wellsted. The local Resistance group,

Maquis Bernard, camped in the forest close to Wellsted’s men and he recalled that, “although full of enthusiasm, none of the Maquisards, even the most military of them, had any idea of true discipline and were liable easily to be discouraged. Their true worth depended entirely upon the capacity of their leader and the use of their local knowledge.”

On June 24 the Maquis tipped off the SAS that a convoy of Germans and White Russians [Soviets fighting for Germany] was on its way to ambush what they believed to be ‘Canadian paratroopers’. Forewarned, the SAS turned from the hunted to the hunter. “We just toddled off to a road that they would have to pass back to their camp,” wrote sergeant John Noble. “We waited four hours on that road until at long last they came. We were spread over 200 yards along the road and on a pre-arranged signal we opened up. Their order of march was a truck with a 20mm [cannon] on it, a private car, another truck with a 20mm, followed by a motorcycle. I had the first truck to deal with.”

By the time Wellsted arrived at the scene, Noble’s Bren gun had done its work. “The leading German lorry was blazing furiously,” recalled Wellsted. “The windscreen was shattered and the bodies of the men in the cab lolled grotesquely in their seats... beyond the first truck was a small civilian car. It, too, was stopped and derelict, and a huddled form

twitched on the road beside it.” Once the last of the resistance had been overcome, the SAS vanished into the forests, leaving behind a scene of death and destruction. The German retaliation was swift and savage. The next day, eight truck-loads of soldiers burned the villages of Montsauche and Planchez to the ground, raping and killing with impunity.

On June 26 a force of around 300 Germans and White Russians attacked the forest where they believed the SAS to be hiding. But there were no guerrilla fighters and their prey slipped away, having gunned down dozens of Germans as they moved clumsily through the trees.

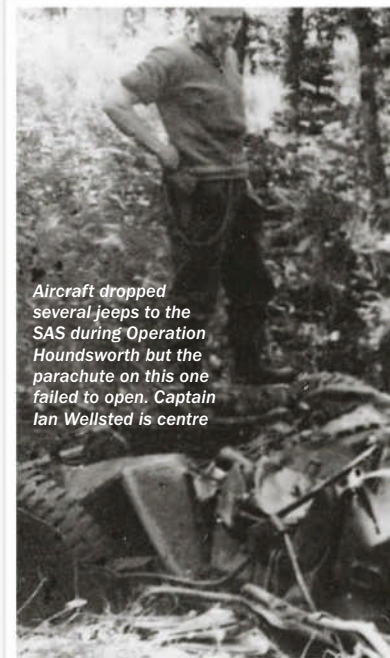
For the rest of June and into the beginning of July, heavy rain fell in the Morvan and there was little activity, either from the SAS or the Germans. Then on 5 July, the SAS received a resupply of food and equipment, including three jeeps dropped by parachute. One of the jeeps was given to Johnny Wiseman, who with a signaller and a couple of other men, departed in the direction of Dijon, where over 30,000 Germans were stationed. Their mission was to

“ONCE THE LAST OF THE RESISTANCE HAD BEEN OVERCOME, THE SAS VANISHED INTO THE FORESTS, LEAVING BEHIND A SCENE OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION”

Right: Paddy Mayne (left) arrived in France on 7 August with Mike Sadler (right) and the pair first paid a visit to Bill Fraser in Houndsworth



The men of Houndsworth familiarise themselves with a mortar prior to their successful attack on Autun



Aircraft dropped several jeeps to the SAS during Operation Houndsworth but the parachute on this one failed to open. Captain Ian Wellsted is centre

select targets and call-up RAF air strikes, which they did with considerable success.

Back in the Morvan, the arrival of the jeeps provided the SAS with the means to range far and wide in harassing the enemy. In the most audacious attack, Wellsted and Muirhead targeted a synthetic oil factory at Autun, 25 miles from the SAS camp. "Mortar bombs were plumping most satisfactorily into the factory area at the range of 700 yards and dense clouds of steam were seen rising from broken pipes," wrote Muirhead. "Then with a roar the 7 Vickers K opened up at 200 yards spraying the whole area with tracer and incendiary. Each gun pouring two full pans into the rising steam."

Several times sabotage parties cut the railway lines to Paris, slowing the Germans as they transported men and munitions towards the heavy fighting in Normandy.

The most successful such operation was led by the desert veteran, Jeff Du Vivier, who in late July laid three pressure charges under a 50-yard stretch of track. It was a complex and time-consuming job for Du Vivier and his two comrades, but their patience was rewarded when a munitions train appeared a few hours later.

The engine was destroyed and ten of the 40 wagons were blown off the line, damaging several anti-aircraft guns. Best of all, noted Du Vivier in his report after the action, the Germans were left "very frightened and demoralised" by the sabotage.

Fittingly, the final ambush was carried out by A Squadron's CO, Bill Fraser, who on 3 September attacked and killed seven German officers. Five days later, the squadron arrived in England having been replaced by Tony Marsh's C Squadron. In their three months in France, Fraser's men had killed or wounded 220 Germans, derailed six trains, destroyed 23 motorised vehicles and damaged a synthetic oil refinery. Their casualties were two dead and seven wounded.

The Nazis called them 'terrorists' but the SAS were World War II's most effective special forces unit. Tough, fit, disciplined and intelligent, the SAS killed 7,733 Germans during operations in France

Illustration: Jean-Michel Girard, The Art Agency



"THE ENGINE WAS DESTROYED AND TEN OF THE FORTY WAGONS WERE BLOWN OFF THE LINE, DAMAGING SEVERAL ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS"

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

CRUCIAL TO THE ALLIED EFFORT, VARIOUS SAS SQUADRONS ENTERED GERMAN TERRITORY AND CAUSED MAYHEM FOR THE ENEMY, DESTROYING WEAPONS, SUPPLIES AND COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORT LINES

OPERATION COONEY

A French SAS operation that entailed inserting 18 small sabotage teams by parachute. Cooney's aim was to isolate Brittany by cutting its railway lines within 48 hours. The mission began on 8 June and forced a battlegroup of the German 275th Division heading towards the beachhead to abandon the railway and take to the road, arriving 48 hours behind schedule.

OPERATION TITANIC

Commanded by Lieutenants Poole and Fowles, Titanic comprised four men and its mission was to create a diversion just behind the Normandy beaches prior to the arrival of the main invasion fleet. This was done by throwing several sandbags dressed as paratroopers from the aircraft that were fitted with firecrackers to explode on landing. It wasn't a success.

OPERATION HAFT

A reconnaissance mission in July to radio back details of German positions ahead of the breakout from the Cotentin Peninsula.

OPERATION DINGSON

A French SAS mission in Brittany in June, culminating in the Battle of St Marcel, which cost six SAS and 300 Germans dead.

OPERATION BULBASKET

Commanded by Captain John Tonkin, Bulbasket was a 1SAS operation that began on the night of 5/6 June when the men parachuted into the countryside south of Poitiers. From the start, the operation suffered from the proximity of large numbers of enemy troops and at dawn on 3 July the camp was overrun with the Germans who captured 31 SAS soldiers, all of whom were executed.

Right: To supply the SAS parties with jeeps required four huge 90 foot parachutes for each vehicle



“THE OPERATION SUFFERED FROM THE PROXIMITY OF LARGE NUMBERS OF ENEMY TROOPS AND AT DAWN ON JULY 3 THE CAMP WAS OVERRUN WITH THE GERMANS CAPTURING 31 SAS SOLDIERS, ALL OF WHOM WERE EXECUTED”

OPERATION GAIN

About 60 men from D Squadron, 1SAS, operated for two months in the Rambouillet area, approximately 30 miles south of Paris. Though they lost several men, the SAS inflicted much damage on the Germans in a series of hit and run raids, while also derailling two trains, cutting 16 railway lines and providing important intelligence on German troop movements close to the capital.

OPERATION RUPERT

A 2SAS operation that only began in the middle of August when the men parachuted into eastern France with instructions to sabotage railway lines between Nancy and Chalons-sur-Marne. By this time, however, the Germans were withdrawing east with the American Third Army in hot pursuit, so the SAS for a time acted as reconnaissance patrols for their allies.

OPERATION HARDY

The forerunner to Operation Wallace, Hardy's mission was to lay supplies and provide intelligence for Roy Farran's squadron when they arrived.

OPERATION HAGGARD

B Squadron, 1SAS, dropped west of the Loire in early August, establishing a base between the towns of Bourges and Nevers. Ordered to spread 'alarm and despondency' among the Germans, they did just that. In one attack on 25 August, they ambushed a German convoy with a huge roadside bomb before mopping up the survivors with small-arms fire. An estimated 100 Nazis were killed.

“ ORDERED TO SPREAD ‘ALARM AND DESPONDENCY’ AMONG THE GERMANS, THEY DID JUST THAT. IN ONE ATTACK ON 25 AUGUST, THEY AMBUSHED A GERMAN CONVOY WITH A HUGE ROADSIDE BOMB BEFORE MOPPING UP THE SURVIVORS WITH SMALL-ARMS FIRE”



OPERATION WALLACE

HEADING EAST TOWARDS AUXERRE, C SQUADRON FOUGHT A COMPANY OF THE AFRIKA KORPS AND TOOK DOWN A TRAIN IN THE PROCESS

The officer who replaced Bill Stirling as commanding officer of 2SAS was lieutenant colonel Brian Franks. Charming and debonair, he nonetheless grew increasingly frustrated as the summer of 1944 wore on at the lack of opportunities for his regiment. A couple of missions were aborted at the last minute because of concerns about the operational area, and when the first parties did insert in August, they were soon overrun by the American Third Army, now on its dash east across France.

So when Major Roy Farran and 60 men of C Squadron, 2SAS, disembarked from their Dakotas at Rennes airfield in 20 jeeps, they were determined to waste no time in taking the fight to the Germans.

It was August 19 when they motored away from Rennes towards Auxerre on the start of Operation Wallace. Four days later, the SAS had their first contact with the enemy when they encountered a company of tanned Afrika Korps, recently arrived from Italy and still in their tropical battledress of khaki shirts and blue shorts. "Everything had seemed so peaceful," recalled sergeant major Harry Vickers. "When we heard the explosion, we turned the bend and saw Farran getting everyone organised."

Farran was a veteran of many a firefight and knew the importance of seizing the initiative. He ordered one section to cover their right and then sent Vickers's section, with their four Brens, into the hedgerow on their left. The Afrika Korps soon attacked, believing their superior numbers would prevail. "I started to spray the hedge with

bullets and as I did so I could hear the Germans shouting rude things at us," said Vickers.

The fight lasted an hour and cost the Germans dozens of casualties. The SAS lost no one and withdrew to find another route to Auxerre. By the end of August, they had reached their operational area and began hunting out Germans. Vehicles were destroyed, roads were mined, billets attacked and on one occasion a train strafed as it chuffed down the line

On 30 August, they ambushed a convoy of 30 trucks as they approached the German garrison in the Chateau Marmont in Chatillon. Vickers, awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his courage during the attack, was the first to open fire from a distance of 20 yards. In his memoirs, Farran described how "the first five trucks, two of which were loaded with ammunition, were brewed up and we were treated to a glorious display of fireworks.

Vickers, years later, recalled it "as all a bit bloody." The SAS suffered one fatality in the ambush; the Germans lost nearly 100 men.

Operation Wallace continued to inflict heavy casualties on the Germans in the first week of September, the aggression and mobility of the SAS helped by the growing confusion in the

enemy ranks as they began their withdrawal to the east.

On 7 September, Vickers opened fire on two German staff cars he saw speeding down the road, killing a battalion commander and his second in command. The following day the SAS destroyed five German petrol tankers. On 13 September they launched a mortar attack on the enemy-held town of Langres, raining down bombs from a commandeered Peugeot. "It had a sliding roof in the first place," recalled Bob Walker-Brown, the officer who led the assault. "We enlarged it, took out the back seat and stuffed the mortar on top of a lot of sandbags. It says a lot for the Peugeots of the time."

Three days later, Farran made contact with the US Seventh Army, bringing to an end to Operation Wallace. In his report he estimated that he and his men had killed or wounded 500 Germans, destroyed 59 motorised vehicles, plus a train, and blown up 100,000 gallons of enemy fuel. 2SAS casualties were seven dead and seven wounded. "This operation proves that with correct timing and in suitable country, with or without the active help of the local population, a small specially trained force can achieve results out of all proportion to its numbers," he concluded.

"HE ESTIMATED THAT HE AND HIS MEN HAD KILLED OR WOUNDED 500 GERMANS, DESTROYED 59 MOTORISED VEHICLES, PLUS A TRAIN, AND BLOWN UP 100,000 GALLONS OF ENEMY FUEL"

A VETERAN OF OPERATION KIPLING

ALEXANDER 'ALEC' BORRIE WAS BORN IN LONDON IN 1925 TO A VETERAN OF WORLD WAR I WHO HAD SURVIVED FOUR YEARS IN THE TRENCHES. WHEN HE WAS 14, BORRIE LEFT SCHOOL AND BECAME AN APPRENTICE JOINER AND DURING THE BLITZ HE WAS INVOLVED IN REPAIRING BOMB-DAMAGED BUILDINGS. IN 1942, AGED 17, HE ENLISTED IN THE BRITISH ARMY AND WAS POSTED TO THE HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY

WHEN AND HOW DID YOU JOIN THE SAS?

In 1943, my battalion was posted to the Orkney Islands to guard against German raiding parties. Nothing happened and eventually in January 1944 the battalion was disbanded. We were given the choice of joining the Commandos, Parachute Regiment or the SAS; I chose the SAS, nor really knowing what they did.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

I was interviewed by the commanding officer, who was Paddy Mayne, and once accepted, I was ordered to Darvel in Scotland where 1SAS was based. I later found out that I was one of only 30 from 300 to be chosen by Mayne. By the time we'd finished the parachute training at Ringway, the number was down to about 15 men.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE SOME OF THE SAS TRAINING?

A lot of exercises in the Scottish countryside learning how to navigate and also endurance marches. We learned about explosives, how to blow trains off lines and we even got to

drive a steam train in case once we were in France we ever needed to move it up the line.

WHEN DID YOU GO TO FRANCE?

I was in C Squadron, commanded by Major Tony Marsh, and we went in to replace A Squadron [see Operation Houndsworth] on Operation Kipling. On August 19, the squadron, plus about 20 jeeps, landed in Dakotas in Rennes and motored down to near Orleans. It took us about three days and I was in a section under the command of Lieutenant Roy Close.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST SEE ACTION?

I've heard it said we went on a seven-day patrol. I don't remember it like that, I recall we just drove around looking for targets. We got word that there were three German trucks driving along the Nevers road, so Roy Close decided we'd ambush them on a bend where a rough gravel track led up towards some woods. As the trucks came into view

we opened fire, destroying the vehicles and killing about 15 Germans.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

What we didn't know was that the convoy had an armoured escort. So the next thing it all went off, this heavy machine guns knocking great lumps out of the trees around us. Roy Close yelled "back up the track." But the jeeps were stacked one behind each other so it wasn't easy. One ended up in a ditch and another, Close's, got stuck over a log with its wheels spinning. I was driving the third jeep. We managed to free the log and the two jeeps sped off leaving the third behind.

ANY CASUALTIES?

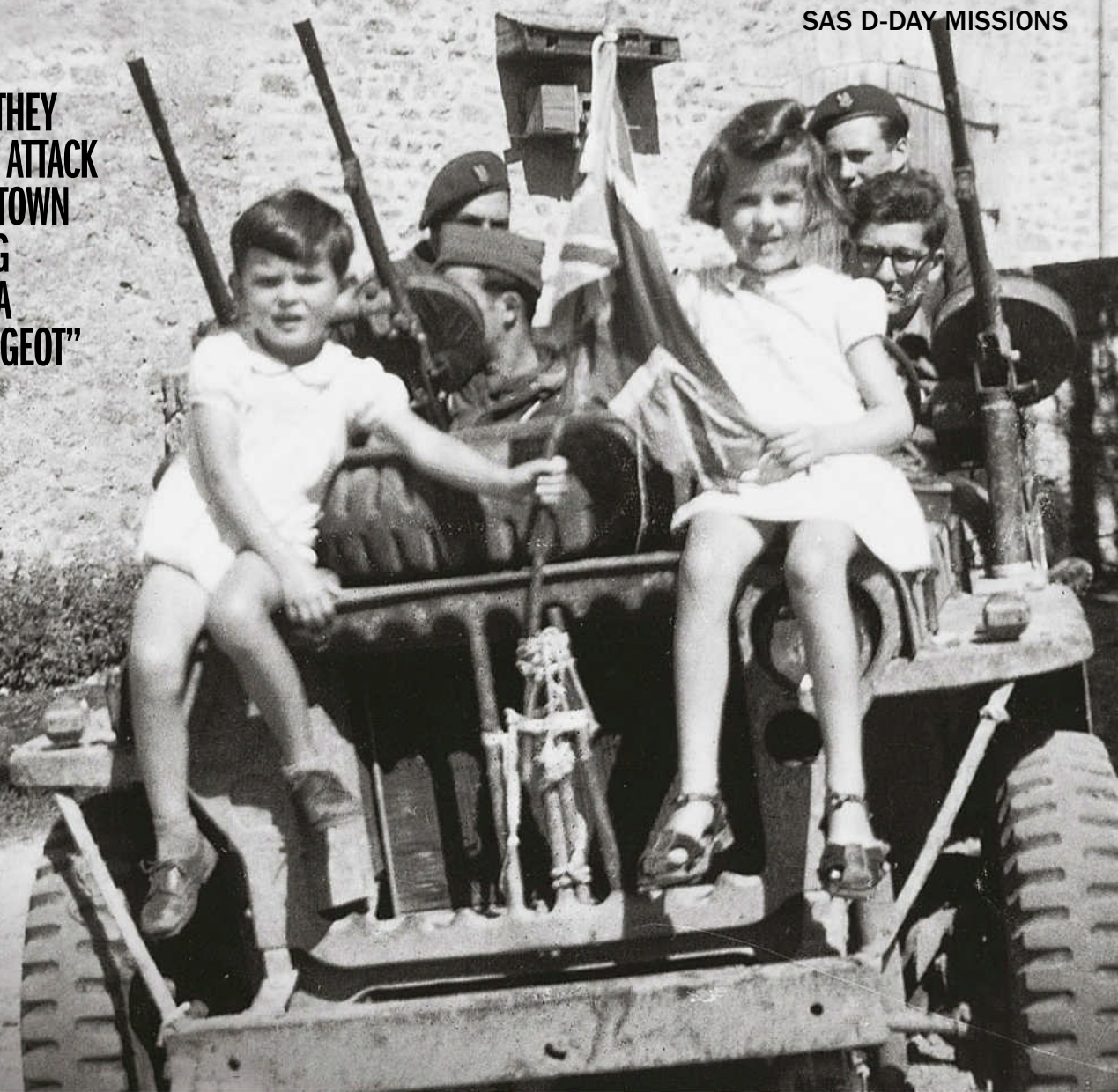
The reason the jeep went into a ditch was because its driver, Joe Craig, got a bullet through his

Right: Johnny Cooper, one of the SAS Originals, at the wheel of his jeep, which he's christened 'Constance' in honour of his girlfriend



“ON 13 SEPTEMBER, THEY LAUNCHED A MORTAR ATTACK ON THE ENEMY-HELD TOWN OF LANGRES, RAINING DOWN BOMBS FROM A COMMANDEERED PEUGEOT”

The SAS were welcomed as liberators to France, sometimes prematurely, as the Germans were still in the vicinity and likely to come looking for the special forces



hand. We cleaned the wound by pulling a cloth covered with sulfonate cream right through the hole. It healed beautifully.

DID THE GERMANS GIVE CHASE?

No but not long after we passed through the village of Chatillon-en-Bazois and the people treated us as liberators. They threw flowers at us and wanted to have a party. We tried to tell them that we hadn't liberated them and they should get back in their houses because the Germans were near.

HOW DID THE REST OF THE PATROL GO?

We just continued to drive around looking for targets. We

had a couple more shoot-ups but by this stage of the war, we were running out of targets because the Germans were fast retreating east.

Eventually we got ordered down to Dijon, I believe to look for any German snipers who had been left behind.

WERE YOU AWARE THE GERMANS HAD ORDERS TO EXECUTE ANY SAS SOLDIERS THEY CAPTURED?

We were told about the order and so we knew what would happen if captured. When you're 19, you think that might happen to others but not you.

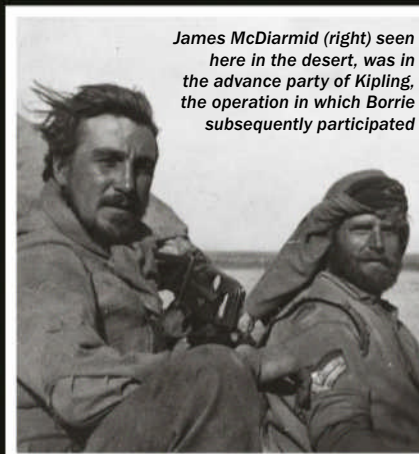
DID YOU COME THROUGH THE WAR UNSCATHED?

No, on 14 April 1945 my jeep drove over a landmine as we advanced into Germany. My sergeant, Sandy Davidson, who had just become a dad, was killed and another trooper was badly burned. I spent several weeks in hospital recovering from wounds to my right leg.

Below: Paddy Mayne, a pre-war rugby international for Ireland, takes the SAS in scrum practice during a light-hearted training session in Darvel (April 1944)



Tony Marsh (left) and Roy Close



James McDiarmid (right) seen here in the desert, was in the advance party of Kipling, the operation in which Borrie subsequently participated



(l-r) Major Pat Hart, Paddy Mayne and Roy Farran wait for their transport at Stavanger airport in Norway, in the summer of 1945



OPERATION LOYTON

WITH THE VOSGES REINFORCED TO STOP THE ONCOMING THIRD ARMY, THE SAS WERE CHARGED WITH ATTACKING THE WITHDRAWING NAZIS

With Operation Wallace having run its course, Roy Farran had hoped to lead his men east to link up with another 2SAS mission, code-named Loyton. But word reached him that the Nazis, determined to stop the Third Army advance towards Germany, had brought in reinforcements who were well dug-in along the east bank of the Moselle River. Additionally, the Americans, in their dash across France, had stretched their supply line to breaking point. Instead Farran led his squadron to Paris to enjoy a week's leave in the French capital.

The men on Operation Loyton, meanwhile, were involved in a deadly game of cat and mouse with the Germans. The SAS advance party had parachuted into the rugged region known as the Vosges in late August with orders to attack the enemy as they withdrew into Germany. The drop zone was a meadow encircled by forest and near the village of La Petite Raon, "Not the best landing for me as I

could see that I was drifting towards the trees and pulling hard on my rigging lines didn't help," recalled Dusty Crossfield. "I crashed through the branches and came to rest swinging gently with no idea of the distance between me and the ground. I punched my quick release and dropped heavily to the deck – it must have been about 15 feet. Someone was running towards me and I reckon I had my colt 45 out faster than John Wayne, but the quick cry of 'Tres bien, Angleterre' saved the lad from being shot."

Among the Maquis reception committee was 21-year-old Henri Poirson. "One of the British, sergeant Seymour, hurt his ankle on landing so we had to carry him back to our camp," he said. "The next day captain Druce [the SAS commander] decided they needed a new base because there were so many Germans in the area it was becoming dangerous."

As the SAS moved through the forest, they encountered an enemy patrol and in the ensuing firefight two British soldiers were killed and two were captured, one of whom was Seymour.

By the end of August, 34 more SAS soldiers had been inserted by parachute, including lieutenant colonel Brian Franks, and a number of jeeps. That provided the British with mobility and firepower, but as Druce recalled: "The Germans had sent a division from Strasbourg to find us and we were pretty

oppressed." Nonetheless, the SAS embarked on a series of offensive patrols, shooting up any enemy vehicle they encountered on the winding forest roads. In the most spectacular raid, Druce attacked a unit of SS troops as they formed up in the village square of Mousse, machine-gunning them with the jeep's Browning and inflicting many casualties. The Germans retaliated by transporting the male population of Mousse to concentration camps; only 70 of the 210 returned.

The SAS were also learning that they had dropped into a region where history had divided the people's loyalties. Some villagers in the Vosges considered themselves French, but others had German blood and were only too willing to pass on information to the Nazis. On 24 September, Poirson was arrested by the SS as he arrived at the timber yard where he worked as a lorry driver. "They put me up against a wall and were going to shoot me but then an officer appeared and said 'no, not this one'" he recalled.

Poirson believes he knows who betrayed him, and he thinks they gave his name to the Germans only after a promise he wouldn't be executed. Instead Poirson was put on a train east, first to Auschwitz, where he spent several weeks taking the bodies of the dead to the incinerator and then Dachau, where he remained until the camp was liberated by the Americans.



Henri Poirson, seen here in 2016, was a member of the Resistance who fought with the SAS in Operation Loyton and was subsequently captured and sent to Auschwitz

“SOME VILLAGERS IN THE VOSGES CONSIDERED THEMSELVES FRENCH, BUT OTHERS HAD GERMAN BLOOD, AND WERE ONLY TOO WILLING TO PASS ON INFORMATION TO THE NAZIS”



The SAS participate in a service of commemoration for the victims of Moussey killed in German concentration camps

By the start of October, Franks had concluded that with the American advance stalled, Operation Loyton had no further purpose. It had been a botched operation from the start, a mix of misfortune and bad planning by SHAEF. So, on 6 October Franks split his men into five parties and instructed them to withdraw west, through an area rife with Germans. "The colonel saw us all off and scrounged a packet of fags from me as he wished us goodbye and good luck," recalled Crossfield, who left in a party of five, one of whom was Jock Robb. "All went well for us over the next couple of days despite some very close calls with the enemy," said Crossfield. "We then came up against a fairly wide river [the Meurthe] and as we undressed to swim across,

Below: The graves in Moussey cemetery of the three of the SAS soldiers caught and executed by the Germans

"DRUCE ATTACKED A UNIT OF SS TROOPS AS THEY FORMED UP IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE OF MOUSSEY, MACHINE-GUNNING THEM WITH THE JEEP'S BROWNING AND INFLECTING MANY CASUALTIES. THE GERMANS RETALIATED BY TRANSPORTING THE MALE POPULATION OF MOUSSEY TO CONCENTRATION CAMPS"

I became aware that Jock was doing nothing. He then told me that he was staying where he was because he couldn't swim. He'd lied during training and got through somehow without being found out. It was too difficult a crossing for me to ferry him over and I was damned if I was going to leave a good pal. So I got dressed again and we decided to find our own way by a different

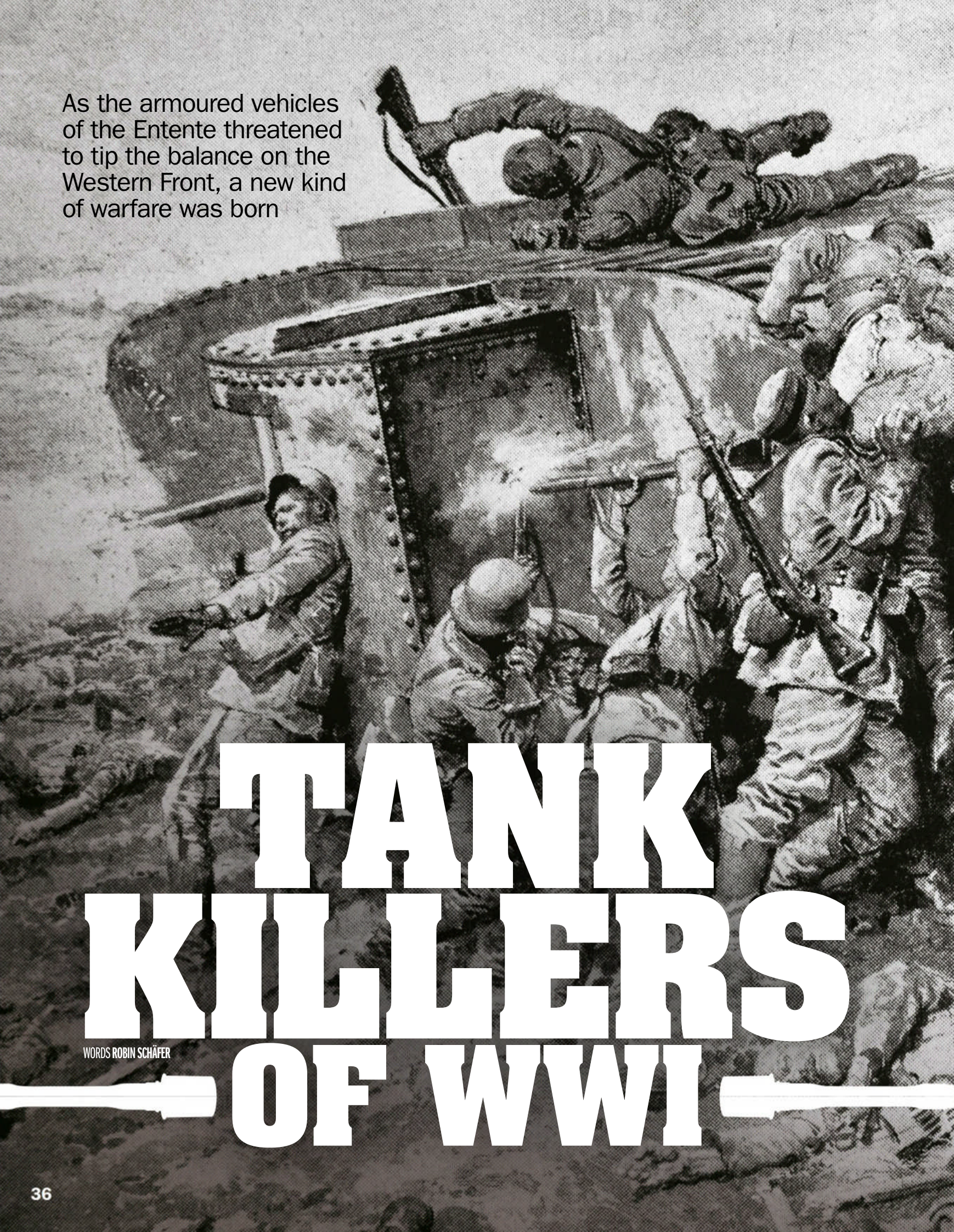
route back to safety." The pair eventually made it through the German lines where they were reunited with Franks and the others who had returned safely.

However, 31 soldiers on Operation Loyton didn't make it back. Caught individually or in small groups, they were questioned, tortured and then executed.

Images: Alamy, Getty



As the armoured vehicles of the Entente threatened to tip the balance on the Western Front, a new kind of warfare was born



TANK KILLERS OF WWI

WORDS ROBIN SCHÄFER

A contemporary World War I illustration of a futile attack by German soldiers on a British tank in France

The 15 September 1916 began as a cool, foggy autumn morning. In the region of Picardie, thick mist covered the rolling hills, forests, lakes and villages. Temperatures were low, only about six degrees, but were forecast to rise to a warmer 15 over the course of the day.

Since June, one of the most terrible battles in human history had been raging along a 40 kilometre-wide stretch of the front in the area of the River Somme. For weeks Allied troops had been locked into a bloody attritional battle with German defenders. Millions of artillery shells had turned the once beautiful landscape into something that resembled the surface of the Moon, countless men had died, yet neither side had achieved ultimate success.

On this morning, a Friday, German troops prepared themselves for yet another attack by British infantry. After being subjected to three days of artillery fire they knew that something was coming their way. The bulk of the main coming offensive was carried forward by the British 4th Army and was aimed against the stretch of land between Combles and Pozières with supporting and flanking attacks launched by Canadian divisions in the North and French ones in the South. Facing the assault were the men of the German 1st Army with its mostly southern German divisions. Today they would be facing a completely new and terrible enemy.

When the clouds of gas and smoke parted, gigantic, noisy machines made of iron and armed with cannon and machine guns came rumbling towards the dumbstruck German defenders. In a number of regiments, like in the 5th and 9th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, soldiers panicked when they noticed that the bullets of their rifles and machine guns did no harm to the infernal contraptions. They

TANK KILLERS OF WWI

continued rolling, squashing barbed wire entanglements and shell craters, followed closely by columns of enemy infantry. In other places they positioned themselves on crossroads and pathways, directing a withering fire on everything that dared to move while others, slowly but steadily, penetrated the first defensive lines and rolled into the streets of German-held villages.

The casualties rose, and some German defenders began to fall back – this new enemy seemed to be unstoppable. A German war correspondent was among the first to write about these impressions:

“Over the shell-cratered fields two beasts came crawling. The monstrosities were slow, limping, swaying, rocking, but closer they came. No obstacle could hold them and they seemed to be driven forward by some unholy force. Our machine gun and small arms fire just bounced off them and that way they easily managed to wipe out our men manning even the furthestmost shell crater positions.”

What baffled German defenders experienced was the first battlefield use of a new and top-secret weapon that would forever change the way war was being waged – the tank.

The tank's first action, the Battle of Flers-Courcelette had not been the major success the Allies had wished for. Of the 36 tanks

that had managed to reach the area of operation, only 27 had arrived at the first German line, 18 of those managed to bring their firepower to bear on the German defenders and only six managed to get close to their final objectives.

By the end of the day, most of the tanks had suffered mechanical breakdowns, while others had been destroyed by the Germans, mainly by the use of indirect and direct artillery fire.

In later stages of the Battle of the Somme, at Thiepval on 25 September, at Beaumont Hamel on 16 November and in the Ancre Valley on 17 November, results were very similar. In the following years the German Army would work feverishly on new strategies, tactics and weapons that would enable its soldiers to effectively defeat the tank.

IMPROVISATION AND LEARNING

When tanks made their first appearance on the battlefield on that fateful day in September 1916, the German infantry stood helpless in the face of the iron machines. Gefreiter Wilhelm Axer of the 28th Reserve-Infantry-Regiment, who was killed in action three months later, wrote about his experiences on that day, after seeing the British tank for the first time, in a letter to his parents:

“They are oblong-shaped machines about 15 meters long and four to five meters high, completely built from iron and armed with



Gunners could take out tanks by firing 5mK rounds over short distances

ten or more machine guns. They are pushed forward by shovels, which are mounted on both sides. When they first came towards us, we all fired at it with our rifles. The whole company gave rapid fire, yet our bullets just bounced off the iron plating.”

His regiment was among the first to be confronted with the new war machines. Holding a line near Combles, one of the most important German defensive positions during this phase of the Battle of the Somme, the men of RIR 28 did not panic and braced themselves to engage their new enemy in combat.

The two attacking female tanks were greeted with a hail of small arms fire while one of them, being closer to the German lines of defence, was attacked by German infantry with hand grenades, igniting its fuel tank and putting it out of action.



A Nahkampf-Batterie opens fire on the enemy. These units were highly effective at taking out tanks

“EFFECTIVE AS THESE IMPROVISED MEANS WERE, THEY COULD ONLY BE BROUGHT TO BEAR WHEN THE DEFENDERS MANAGED TO BEAT ANOTHER, FAR MORE DANGEROUS ADVERSARY – THEIR OWN FEAR”

“One of the armoured automobiles came nearer and it was clear that something needed to be done and so our Leutnant led a group out of the trench to attack the beast with hand grenades. It was a success as soon afterwards flames and black smoke erupted from it. A sight that we greeted with applause and loud cheers”

Near the forest of Foreaux, a Bavarian regiment found that SmK (Spitz mit Kern) ammunition was a highly effective weapon in the fight against tanks. Initially developed to fight infantry covering behind armoured shields of the type used by all sides in the construction of fighting trenches, ‘SmK’ or simply ‘K’ bullets sported an iron core and offered limited armour-piercing capabilities. Being able to pierce 11 millimetres of steel plating on a range of 100 meters, the K-bullet was a fearsome weapon.

Even if no penetration was achieved, the impact of a heavy K-bullet on a tank’s exterior could send small but dangerous shards of metal flying inside the crew compartment, easily injuring the crews. Yet in September

1916, these rounds were only distributed thinly and in small numbers. During the course of the Battle of the Somme German troops learned that rifle and pistol fire through hatches and vision slits showed some effect. The same applied to hand grenades, especially when used as a bundled charge (three to five stick grenades tied to together).

As effective as these improvised means were, they could only be brought to bear when the defenders managed to beat another, far more dangerous adversary – their own fear. Throughout the remainder of the war, the tank terror, or Tankschrecken, often ham-stringed and crippled the defenders’ resolve to hold their positions and only the most experienced troops could be expected to effectively engage a tank in close combat. Other means had to be found to guarantee success and to strengthen the morale of the infantry.

The new British war machines needed to be destroyed from a distance and before they were able to bring the effect of their guns, weight and size to bear. During the Battle of the Somme it was the artillery that had proven itself to be the key to achieve this.

“Terrible days lie behind me. Only some words about them. In our last engagement we have stalled an English attack. Amidst the most severe enemy fire, our two guns fired over 1,200 shells into the attacking enemy columns. Firing over open sights we inflicted terrible casualties on them. We also destroyed an armoured automobile armed with two quick firing guns. It was curiously egg shaped and powered by two enormous shovels that dug into the ground pulling the vehicle forward”

**- Robert Stieler,
Feldartillerie-Regiment Nr 13**

In the area in front of Gueudecourt it was two young officers of the 29th Field Artillery Regiment who’d be the first soldiers in history to engage and destroy tanks with a field artillery piece in direct fire. The leutnants, Löbnitz and Eberhard, making their way towards the rear came across an abandoned artillery battery and manned one of the guns. What happened next is described in the regimental history of FAR 29:

“The staff company is forced to retreat. The enemy is pressing forward with all his might. At that moment the two spot a virtually abandoned battery. Quickly they man one of the guns. Tanks appear. Shot after shot leaves the barrel. After 50 rounds, two of the enemy’s new armoured vehicles are destroyed. Leutnant Eberhard is killed in

NAHKAMPFKANONE 96

THE NAHKAMPFKANONE, A MODIFIED FELDKANONE 96, CAN BE CONSIDERED THE FOREFATHER OF THE MODERN ANTI-TANK GUN

BARREL

The close-combat gun could fire the same 7.7cm of all types. A dedicated armour-piercing shell for anti-tank use was introduced in mid 1917.

WHEELS AND GUN SHIELD

Wheels have been reduced in diameter and the lower gun-shield has been cut off to give a the gun a much lower silhouette than that of the standard Feldkanone.

AXLE

Along with the other modifications, the axle seats of the standard Feldkanone have been removed to lose unnecessary weight. With a weight of 900 kilos, the gun was still too heavy to be easily manhandled in the field.

“A DEDICATED ARMOUR-PIERCING SHELL FOR ANTI-TANK USE WAS INTRODUCED IN MID 1917”

“IN HORROR I WATCH AS FROM BEHIND A FOLD IN THE GROUND ON OUR LEFT A HUGE CONE OF THICK BLACK SMOKE AND GLOWING HOT FIRE RISES UP. THE PILLAR OF FIRE ROARS HIGHER AND HIGHER UNTIL IT IS AS TALL AS THE HIGHEST CHURCH SPIRES”



THE GERMANS RESPOND

New Zealand forces on the Western Front, in a German emplacement, pose with a captured anti-tank rifle

REPORT OF AN UNIDENTIFIED PIONEER OFFICER DESCRIBING THE EVENTS ON 16 SEPTEMBER 1916

"More and more shells are smashing into our trench and because of that I am surprised that I can hear the sound of rifle fire and the tack-tack-tack sound of machine guns. That can't be in our place! In that moment a sentry in front of us shouts: 'They are coming'. We jump out of our hole and race towards the parapet. There is no enemy in front of us, but there on the other side, wave after wave is streaming out of the village of Flers. They advance as if on parade and seem to ignore the storm of iron that our batteries unleash upon them. So far, they don't seem to be receiving any defensive fire from the front. This is going too far, with our sights set to 1,000 and 1,100 meters we start plastering them, and after firing a number of strips, it suddenly gets quiet.

"A good number of them have gone down. We replace the barrel protectors on our rifles, no Englishmen can be seen. But suddenly we can at least hear them again. Sssst! Sssst! Bullets start whizzing over our trench. We can hardly raise our heads. Now we are being plastered with machine guns. The hours pass, the fighting gets hotter. Again the sound of rifle and machine gun fire in front of us gets louder. A quick glance over the parapet shows that the English have managed to close in and are now preparing for a final assault on the defensive trench at Foreaux Wood. But the small bunch of field greys there know how to defend themselves. They are standing on the parapet, firing their rifles and throwing grenades.

Suddenly some weird things seem to happen, there is sound of an engine and a number of hollow sounding detonations. One of my men suddenly shouts: "Flammenwerfer!" In horror I watch as from behind a fold in the ground on our left, a huge cone of thick black smoke and glowing hot fire rises up. The pillar of fire roars higher and higher until it is as tall as the highest church spires. But it doesn't look like the devastating fire of a flame thrower. Some time after that, an officer from the neighbouring infantry company tells me that the English had attacked with an 'armoured automobile'. Our artillery had destroyed it with four shots. The final one hit the machine's fuel tank, which had led to an explosion. That was what we had witnessed."

A British tank prepares to advance at Flers Courcellette



TANK KILLERS OF WWI

action. In the evening some brave gunners recover his dead body. Löbnitz continues firing until he runs out of ammunition."

Leutnant Wilhelm Eberhard is buried in the German military cemetery of Maissemy in France. A day later, again at Gueudecourt, two more tanks were destroyed in a similar manner:

"Two English armoured cars, with great speed and lots of guts, advance from the direction of Flers taking course towards Gueudecourt and Lesbeuf. They didn't reckon on a gun platoon of the 12th Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment hiding near Gueudecourt. We see the dauntless gun crews jumping out of shell craters and manning the guns. With rapid fire, they finish off the first and after a while the second tank with direct hits. After powerful detonations the two eerie things keep burning throughout the day and during all of this time ammunition keeps detonating. We are delighted by this success, which sadly we could only be witnesses to."

Even though the first encounters with enemy tanks had shown that improvised and makeshift means of defence against armour could eventually lead to good results, the birth of the German Tankabwehr can be dated to 21 October 1916, when the German Ministry of War gave orders to the Artillerie-Prüfungs-Kommission (APK = Artillery Testing Commission) to develop new and effective means to counter tanks in combat. The APK was a military authority of the Army and Navy in Berlin providing specialised expertise and

trial capabilities for the German General and Admiral Staff by determining requirements and conducting impartial trials and evaluations on new and modified equipment.

The first specialised anti-tank weapons were supposed to be guns with a calibre of up to 5.7 centimetres, mobile enough to be used in the trenches and able to fire canister rounds against soft targets. A simple enough task, which was made difficult by the fact that no tank had so far been captured or even examined up close. Very little was known about the mechanical and technical capabilities of this new enemy.

At no point during the Battle of the Somme did a British tank actually fall into German hands and it was impossible to reach the wrecks that were standing in no man's land. It would take another seven months before the German Army would have the chance to actually examine a British tank and to properly evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.

Before that was possible the German side had to gather information by extracting reports from all those units that had engaged tanks in combat; a spectacular mixture of snapshots in time, speculations and half-truths. An official document which today is held in private collection in Karlsruhe records the memories of a soldier of the 162nd Infantry Regiment:

"The enemy vehicles are mostly egg-shaped and move forward on tracks. They are armed with at least four machine guns and cannon. On their backside they mount a pair of wheels which pushes them forward and which are also used for steering. They can carry up to 40 fully armed men and seem to be able to fire large calibre mines"

Preserved drawings show another egg-shaped contraption 4.5 meters in length. It sports three wheels, a pair of skids and a paddle-wheel at the back. Sizes were often drastically exaggerated as was the possible size of the tank crews. Information on armour strength and motorisation had to be speculated on. Nevertheless the value of the new weapon was quickly recognised and understood:

"The vehicles actually gave the English some advantages that are mainly based on the surprise effect. As with every new technical implement, it is that to which we are unaccustomed that has the best effect and this is exactly what happened here. The men treated the slowly advancing beasts with contempt and even laughed about them, but when they came closer and appeared seemingly invulnerable this changed and locally the men even panicked. Rifle and machine gun fire is useless, as are single hand grenades. Bundled charges effective, but they can only be handled properly by experienced men and large supplies have to be kept. 7.7cm field-guns behind the 2nd trench lines effective in direct fire."

- Experience report of Army Group Crown Prince Rupprecht 21 October 1916

Not willing to wait for results from the APK the German OHL (Army High Command) declared the artillery arm to be the primary service branch when it came to engaging tanks in battle and began to seek solutions on its own. Shortly after the battle of Flers-Courcelette, Schützengraben-Kanonnen-Abteilungen (trench gun detachments), usually operating hand-cranked revolving cannon

In the Battle of the Somme, British tanks were used in action for the first time, causing panic among the Germans



"AT NO POINT DURING THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME DID A BRITISH TANK ACTUALLY FALL INTO GERMAN HANDS AND IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH THE WRECKS THAT WERE STANDING IN NO MAN'S LAND"



A destroyed British tank lies in no man's land

ANTI-TANK WEAPONS

AS A RESPONSE TO THEIR ARMoured ENEMY, THE GERMANS DEVELOPED POWERFUL NEW ARMAMENT



Above: A German infantryman takes aim with an anti-tank rifle

T-GEWEHR (TANKGEWEHR)

Designed in response to the appearance of Allied tanks on the Western Front, the huge bolt-action, single shot Tankgewehr was able to fire a large calibre (13mm) armour-piercing round against armoured targets and tanks. The T Gewehr was issued to front line troops from the spring of 1918 onwards (more information in part two).



Above: A modern anti-tank round, modelled on the K bullet



Above: The Tankgewehr was the world's first anti-tank weapon



Left: A German K Bullet. On average, it has a one out of three chance to penetrate armour 12-13 mm thick

STIELHANDGRANATE (BÜNDELLADUNG - BUNDLED CHARGE)

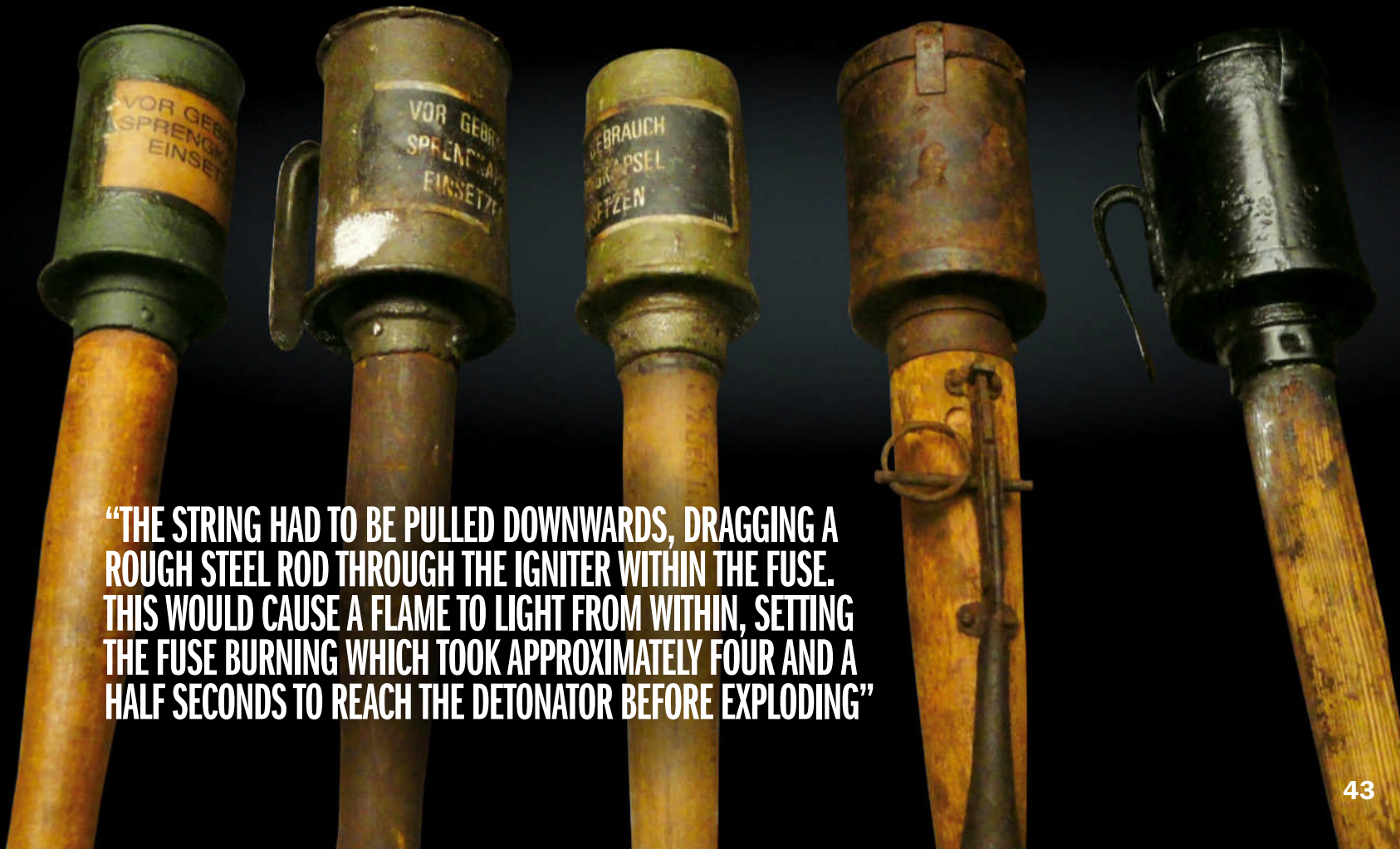
This grenade, known to the Allies as the 'potato masher', mounted a charge head within a steel sheet cylinder atop a long hollow wooden handle.

Internally, the explosive filler (ammonal and later trinitrotoluene) was connected to a detonator and sported a pull-cord that ran from the detonator down the length of the hollow handle to the base. To use it, the string had to

be pulled downwards, dragging a rough steel rod through the igniter within the fuse. This would cause a flame to light from within, setting the fuse burning, which took approximately four and a half seconds to reach the detonator before exploding. Used in larger numbers or as a Bündelladung (bundled charge), they were effective against tanks.

PATRONE SMK (K-PATRONE)

Bullets with a core (Kern) of hardened steel fired from rifles and machine guns. Slightly less pointed and a bit longer than the standard S-Patrone. This ammunition was initially designed to be used against aircraft, light armoured vehicles, loopholes, sniper plates, bunkers and fortified buildings. Soon after the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, it became one of the primary weapons used against tanks.



“THE STRING HAD TO BE PULLED DOWNWARDS, DRAGGING A ROUGH STEEL ROD THROUGH THE IGNITER WITHIN THE FUSE. THIS WOULD CAUSE A FLAME TO LIGHT FROM WITHIN, SETTING THE FUSE BURNING WHICH TOOK APPROXIMATELY FOUR AND A HALF SECONDS TO REACH THE DETONATOR BEFORE EXPLODING”

TANK KILLERS OF WWI

of a calibre of 3.7 centimetres were raised and inserted into the frontline. Yet, mainly due to their low muzzle velocity, they failed to achieve a noticeable effect.

Minenwerfers, firing horizontally seemed to be a promising alternative, but also lacked the punch to be considered a reliable solution. To be on the safe side larger guns had to be used.

Still lacking a specialised and dedicated gun for anti-tank work, experiments were made with a number of modifications of the standard German field gun, the 7.7 centimetres Feldkanone 96 n/A, (and from spring 1917, with the 7.7 centimetres Feldkanone 16 also) which soon led to a result that can be considered the forefather of the anti-tank gun, the 7.7cm Nahkampf-Kanone (close combat gun).

The gun lacked the usual axle tree seats and sported a reduced wheel-diameter of 100 centimetres. This, combined with a modified gun shield from which the lower section had been removed, gave it a much lower silhouette and reduced its weight to 900 kilos.

In January 1917, 50 stationary Nahkampfbatterien (NKB), or close-combat batteries were raised that were supposed to operate in close proximity to the furthest lines and were there to engage enemy tanks

with direct fire. Each NKB sported six of the new, improvised artillery pieces while the officers and gun crews were specifically selected to be able to bear the “disciplinary and moral strain” they would be subjected to when operating as “nests of resistance” in a battle shaped by tanks.

Even though the quality of the men and material of the NKB’s was good, their task was made difficult by the curious decision that they neither had carriage horses, nor limbers or ammunition carts assigned to them.

Once in position, they would be static, nailed to the ground and unable to shift positions if they were needed elsewhere. The guns were too heavy to be man handled over larger distances so they were to be used as ‘silent’ field pieces that did not take part in general bombardments and that only sprung into action at critical moments.

“All the men and officers that are now assembled here have been drawn together from a number of different field artillery regiments. It is not easy to get used to all these new faces. Everything that has worked smoothly before has to be re-learned here, but I am sure it won’t take long. We learn a lot of new things here. It is

of great importance that every man knows to act on his own, even if his superiors have fallen.

The last two days we have been instructed in camouflaging techniques. In our new role we will need to stay invisible for the enemy for as long as possible. That way we can make sure we will hit our targets before we are spotted ourselves. We have been told that there will be a new kind of shell available soon that has been specifically designed to be used against armoured automobiles. Sadly these have not arrived yet. Target practice is also very important as so far we rarely fired directly. It all makes me feel like a young recruit but it is nevertheless interesting... We will be rocks in a stormy sea. The Tommies won’t get past us easily. Artillery forward!

**- Leutnant Hans Rühl,
Nahkampf-Batterie 220**

These lessons and improvements, backed by the fact that artillery had proven itself to be the master of the tank, gave the German Army the confidence of being well prepared for whatever the Allies could throw at them over the coming year.



German soldiers with an anti-tank mine-thrower, circa 1916



A colourised German propaganda photo shows German soldiers with anti-tank guns

“IT IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE THAT EVERY MAN KNOWS TO ACT ON HIS OWN, EVEN IF HIS SUPERIORS HAVE FALLEN”



A German soldier poses next to a knocked-out British tank

Images: Alamy, Getty

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TYRONE

GAEELIC REBEL

Hugh O'Neill, second Earl of Tyrone, was a 16th-century Irish chieftain who inflicted humiliating defeats on the Tudor dynasty and whose downfall changed the island forever

WORDS TOM GARNER

In May 1595 an English army marched through the province of Ulster to resupply a besieged garrison at Monaghan Castle. Irish rebels had been investing the castle and the rumour was that their commander was a Gaelic lord who was supposedly an English ally: Hugh O'Neill, second Earl of Tyrone.

On 25 May, Tyrone rode up to the English camp with a small troop of horsemen. When a knight went to parlay with Tyrone, the Earl apparently stated that by 10am the next morning, "it should be seen whether the queen or they should be masters of the field and owners of Ulster."

The 'queen' was 'Gloriana' herself, Elizabeth I of England, and 'they' were the Irish rebels who Tyrone had suddenly declared himself the leader of. Over the next two days the rebels pounced on the English who were ultimately forced to retire. Tyrone's open defiance against his former masters escalated what had been a provincial rebellion into a nationwide conflict. It became the Nine Years' War.

Although the campaigns of Oliver Cromwell half a century later are more infamous in Irish memory, the Nine Years' War was also a disastrous period in the island's history. Tyrone's fight against the English would not only be the largest conflict fought by England during the Elizabethan era, but it would also permanently alter the political and social structure of Ireland, where its effects are still present today.

The English in Ireland

Although there had been an English presence in Ireland since the Norman invasion of 1169, their direct influence was reduced to a 20-mile area around Dublin known as 'the Pale'. The phrase 'beyond the Pale' literally expressed the English Dubliners' view of a barbarous Ireland that existed outside their small confines.

The vast majority of Ireland was a collection of regional lordships that were either Gaelic or Old English, with the latter being the descendants of the Norman invaders who had adopted Irish customs. These lords only paid lip service to their loyalty to the English crown and were virtually independent, with the powers to raise taxes, maintain courts and own private armies.

The Tudor dynasty began to challenge this anarchic state of affairs and asserted more control. In 1542, Henry VIII elevated his status from 'lord' to 'king' of Ireland and also attempted to enforce his Protestant-influenced Church of England on the staunchly Catholic Irish. This alienated the Irish lords and by the time of Elizabeth I's accession, relations had further deteriorated.

There was a steady increase in the establishment of English settlements and the new landlords regarded the Irish as 'savages' who needed to be 'civilised' with Protestantism and English culture. Many Irish lords resisted these changes but others complied, and it was into this confused national identity crisis that Hugh O'Neill emerged.

Below: The meeting of the Earls of Tyrone and Essex in County Louth, 1599. Tyrone (in the water) was able to secure a humiliating truce from Essex, an act that led to the latter's disgrace



Servant of the crown

The future Earl of Tyrone was born around 1545 and although his father was illegitimate, his grandfather was the first Earl. The Gaelic O'Neill dynasty was the most powerful noble family in Ulster but it was consumed with infighting between those who wanted to become 'the O'Neill' – the feudal overlord of Ulster. O'Neill's father was murdered by his uncle, Shane O'Neill, and the young Hugh spent part of his youth in English households where he adopted the English language, dress and customs. He became so anglicised that on one occasion, he visited the English court with Sir Henry Sidney and apparently, 'trooped in the streets of London, with sufficient equipage and orderly respect'.

The English viewed O'Neill as useful for their aims in Ulster and he was officially installed as baron of Dungannon. When Shane O'Neill was killed in 1567, O'Neill's power increased under English influence between 1568-87. He actively assisted the English plantations near his lands in Ulster and Walter Devereux, first Earl of Essex placed him in charge of a company of cavalry. Essex praised O'Neill as "the only man of Ulster meet to be trusted and used" and in turn the English provided him with military support to extend the lands he already held.

Such were his services to the crown that O'Neill became a captain of government troops and in 1585, Lord Burghley, Elizabeth I's lord treasurer, declared that O'Neill, "be admitted to be Earl of Tyrone according to his right."

The English had elevated Tyrone and even Elizabeth referred to him as "a creature of our own." However, it was a situation that would not last.

Beneficiary to rebel

Tyrone was not completely a 'creature' of the English and his identity as a Gaelic lord was as strong as his services to Elizabeth. As such many Englishmen doubted his loyalty including Sir Henry Bagenal

THE O'NEILL

Hugh O'Neill, second earl of Tyrone, as he might have appeared at the height of his powers during the 1590s. Tyrone would have been surrounded by symbolic Gaelic objects to assert his rule over Ulster. He is standing in front of a stone chair known as 'Leac na Ri' (the flagstone of kings), which would have been used in his inauguration ceremony as 'the O'Neill' overlord of Ulster. In his right hand Tyrone holds a white rod, which was the primary symbol of a Gaelic lord's legitimate authority. Propped against the chair is a large shield known as a 'targe', which would have been a common defensive weapon in Ireland and Scotland.

The depictions of the white rod and the targe are based on a 17th Century painting of Sir Neil O'Neill who was a relative of Tyrone and whose portrait is the only artistic reference for how a traditional Irish chieftain would have appeared.

Paradoxically, Tyrone was also heavily influenced by his English education and experiences at the Elizabethan court. His face is based on a reputed portrait from the Vatican City and his hair is cropped short in the English fashion. Although he was Irish, Tyrone would have wanted to appear as the equal of his enemies and consequently he carries a rapier sword: the recognised weapon of an English gentlemen.

**“TYRONE’S OPEN
DEFIANCE AGAINST
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NATIONWIDE CONFLICT
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YEARS’ WAR”**

Illustration: Jean-Michel Girard, The Art Agency

who was highly angered when his sister later eloped with Tyrone. Bagenal called his brother-in-law, "so traitorous a stock and kindred."

On one occasion the two men fought together at the Battle of Belleek in 1593 against Irish rebels and they won a significant victory – three Englishmen were killed compared to 300 Irish. Tyrone was wounded during the battle, struck in the thigh by a spear, but Bagenal refused to acknowledge his brother-in-law's contribution to the victory in his report.

Moreover, Tyrone had accrued enough power in Ulster to succeed the elderly Turlough Luineach O'Neill in the traditional Gaelic title of 'the O'Neill' in 1593. He was inaugurated at the ancient site of Tullyhogue Fort on a stone chair known as 'Leac na Ri' or 'the flagstone of kings.' Tyrone accepted the allegiance of all the leaders of the O'Neill clan and became the most powerful man in the province.

This move angered the English who saw it as an act of defiance but their suspicions were not without foundation and war was looming.

Below: Charles Blount, Baron Mountjoy won the Nine Years' War for the English and ruthlessly torched much of Ireland to systematically defeat Tyrone



"TYRONE, 'QUITE CAPTIVATES THE FEELINGS OF MEN, BY THE NOBILITY OF HIS LOOKS AND COUNTENANCE, AND WINS THE AFFECTION OF HIS SOLDIERS OR STRIKES TERROR INTO THEM'"

In June 1594, Tyrone's son-in-law, Red Hugh O'Donnell, the Lord of Tyrconnell, joined the defeated rebel commander of Belleek to lay siege to Enniskillen Castle, which was effectively the start of the Nine Years' War. Tyrone's brother Cormac also joined, bringing 100 horsemen and 300 muskets, leaving the rebels to inflict a defeat on a relieving English at the Battle of the Ford of the Biscuits on 7 August and Tyrone was ordered to lead an expedition against his own son-in-law.

It was at this point that matters came to a head. Tyrone's military position was uniquely powerful. As Elizabeth's trusted representative in Ulster, he had the right to maintain 600 soldiers who were trained by English officers in the most modern fighting methods and weapons, including using the latest muskets.

Tyrone also rotated trained men in and out of his unit, which meant that he could train more men than the 600 he had been assigned. In many respects Tyrone's troops were almost indistinguishable from the English, apart from the bagpipes that accompanied them into battle. The Earl himself was reputed to be a

charismatic leader and a fellow Irishman said of him, "He quite captivates the feelings of men, by the nobility of his looks and countenance, and wins the affection of his soldiers or strikes terror into them."

By May 1595, Tyrone's army included 1,000 cavalymen, 1,000 pikemen and 4,000 musketeers as well as other troops who were armed with more traditional weapons like battle axes, swords, spears and bows. With this force,

Tyrone moved against O'Donnell at a slow pace while the English continued to devastate his kinsmen's lands. When Tyrone attempted to act as a mediator between the rebels and the crown, the English consolidated government outposts in Ulster. The rebels besieged English garrisons including Blackwater Fort on Tyrone's lands and the government was forced to send a relieving force of 1,750 men led by Bagenal.

At the Battle of Clontibret between 25-27 March 1595 Tyrone directly confronted Bagenal and by doing so openly aligned himself to the rebel cause. The battle itself was not a pitched encounter but a running fight where Tyrone's men continually ambushed Bagenal's relief column on the way to Monaghan Castle. Hundreds of English soldiers were killed compared to light rebel losses although Tyrone himself was nearly killed when a cornet called Sedgrave led some horsemen and directly charged the Earl.

Sir Ralph Lane recalled that the attack was "...so rude, that they both were unhorsed." Sedgrave attempted to stab Tyrone but the blade could not penetrate the Earl's armour, which had ironically been a gift from Elizabeth's lord chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton. One of Tyrone's men cut off Sedgrave's arm before the Earl reputedly thrust a knife in the cornet's bladder. Bagenal's force only escaped because Tyrone had exhausted all of his powder supplies. Clontibret demonstrated that a rebellion under Tyrone would be an escalation in hostilities and the English proclaimed him a traitor on 24 June 1595.

Below: A 1602 depiction of the inauguration of the Gaelic 'O'Neill' overlord of Ulster at Tullyhogue Fort. Tyrone's inauguration in 1593 was the last of its kind



A 1754 engraving depicting Tyrone's defeat of the English at the Battle of the Yellow Ford. It was the largest victory against England in Irish history



IRELAND DURING THE NINE YEARS' WAR 1594-1603

Although the Nine Years' War began as regional conflict in Ulster in 1594, it eventually spread all over Ireland. Initially, the battles and sieges were contained to the north east with the Irish rebels mainly gaining the upper hand. However, by 1600 the tide had turned in favour of the English who were able to avenge their humiliating defeats with widespread victories.





A contemporary English plan of the Battle of the Yellow Ford in 1598. The battle was the most humiliating English defeat of the Tudor era

Despite the victory at Clontibret, Tyrone knew he would not be able to defeat a large, professional army under an able commander and now endorsed petitions made by other rebels to Philip II of Spain for a Spanish army of 6,000-7,000 men to pursue what was now being described as a war to preserve Roman Catholicism in Ireland. Although this was a direct affront to Elizabeth, who was at war with Spain, Tyrone possibly felt that the English probably couldn't afford to confront him on a two-war front. He was also less enthusiastic than other rebel leaders about claiming the Ulster rebellion to be a religious crusade and wanted to keep his options open. At the same time Tyrone strengthened his military position and fought a defensive war.

The next three years between 1595-98 was largely characterised by intermittent warfare,

where the rebellion spread beyond Ulster but was punctuated by truces and pardons. There was also the constant threat of a Spanish invasion of Ireland, but it never materialised.

In 1597, new English commanders in Ireland were appointed including Thomas, Baron Burgh and Sir Conyers Clifford. These men launched a joint offensive of 3,500 soldiers and recovered some territory in Ulster, including Blackwater Fort and Sligo. Blackwater Fort in particular was reinforced with 150 men and became, "an eyesore in the heart of Tyrone's country." Tyrone lost 400 men in October 1597 in an attempt to storm the fort by scaling ladders, but they were thrown back by the defenders whose weapons included light field guns.

Burgh died of typhus shortly afterwards and his successor to command the English forces, Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormonde, negotiated

a truce with Tyrone. Ormonde regretted that "the scurvy fort at Blackwater" had ever been built because it was isolated and expensive to maintain but it now became a crucial linchpin of the English military policy towards Tyrone who continued to blockade the fort.

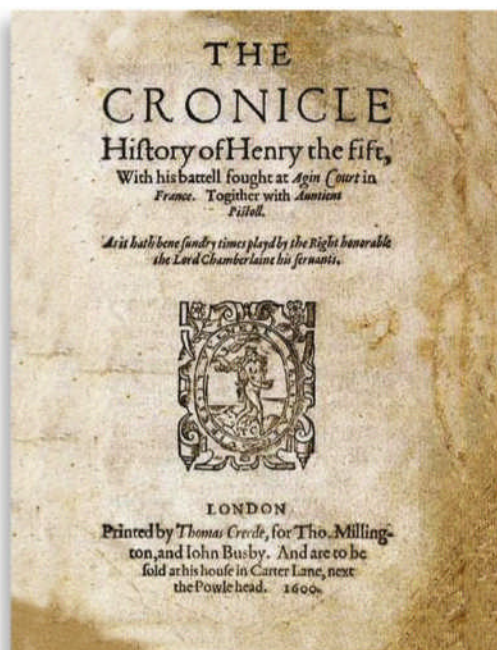
When the truce expired in 1598, the English council in Ireland considered abandoning Blackwater Fort but it was concerned that losing face in Ulster would encourage Tyrone, who reportedly had plans to threaten the Pale. They eventually decided to relieve Blackwater after 1,400 reinforcements landed in Dublin on 2 August. Tyrone's old nemesis Sir Henry Bagenal was placed in command of the relief force and the stage was set for a large-scale encounter between the feuding brother-in-laws.

Battle of the Yellow Ford

Although the English and Irish armies were comparatively small in scale compared with continental forces, Bagenal's relief force was quite large consisting of almost 4,000 infantrymen and 320 cavalry. About 25 per cent of his infantry had already seen combat and around half of his men were actually Irish.

"BAGENAL'S TROOPS WERE 'PUT TO THE SWORD WITHOUT RESISTANCE' AND MANY OF THE ENGLISH TROOPS PANICKED. BAGENAL HIMSELF WAS 'SHOT THROUGH HIS FOREHEAD'"

THE BARD AND THE REBELLION



ENGLISH WAR-WEARINESS OVER THE NINE YEARS' WAR INSPIRED SHAKESPEARE TO WRITE THE PATRIOTIC BUT COMPLEX PLAY HENRY V

The effects of Tyrone's rebellion were keenly felt in England. To Elizabethans, it was an inglorious conflict, especially when thousands of conscripts were shipped over the Irish Sea to be killed or die of disease.

Henry V was written around 1599 and was designed to remind English audiences of their heroic, martial past. Nevertheless, despite being famous for its stirring patriotic speeches, it is a subtle play where references to Ireland abound.

There are antiwar elements that depict harsh campaigning conditions and ordinary soldiers express reservations about why they are fighting. In the final act, Shakespeare broke with theatrical allusion for the only time and directly talked about Essex returning from Ireland, "Were now the General of our gracious Empress, from Ireland coming/Bringing rebellion broached on his sword."

The character of Ancient Pistol is a looting soldier who declares after Agincourt, "To England will I steal, and there I'll steal." This reflected the many traumatised veterans who returned from Ireland and became burdens on their communities.

Shakespeare also arguably introduced the stage Irishman in English theatre with the character of Captain Macmorris. Although the part is small, Macmorris is cleverly written. His name is Anglo-Norman and the Irishman is prickly when asked about his national identity, "What is my nation? Who talks of my nation? Ish a villain, and a bastard, and a knave, and a rascal?" The implication is that if Macmorris is unsure of his identity then where do his loyalties lie? This would have been a question asked of many Irishmen in the 1590s.

Left: With its famous speeches and thoughtful introspection, Henry V was an intelligently patriotic work and was reportedly played "sundry times" during its original run



The Nine Years' War was not a straightforward conflict between the 'English' and 'Irish' and many Irishmen, such as Tyrone, had split loyalties. It is estimated around 75 per cent of Elizabeth's troops by Ireland in June 1598 were Irish and the rest were conscripts from England.

Bagenal's force was not without weaknesses, however. Around 1,500 of his men were partially trained and poorly disciplined and there were problems in his command. His principal flaw was a tendency to let units become widely separated. The Earl of Ormonde noticed this, stating: "whereof I often warned the Marshal to take special care before he went hence." This tactic would prove disastrous.

Below: The siege of the royalist garrison of Enniskillen Castle between June 1594 and May 1595 started the Nine Years' War



The size of Bagenal's army should have been a comfort to the English settlers as a visible sign of Elizabeth's commitment to their safety but Tyrone was about to inflict a painful lesson. The English force passed through Armagh and marched the final stage to Blackwater Fort on 14 August 1598. Bagenal characteristically divided his army into six regiments with two each in the vanguard, main body and rear. The idea was that the three groups would link up if they were attacked but the plan began to unravel at the Callan Brook, which was better known as the Yellow Ford.

The ford was in sight of Blackwater Fort but it was a long trench that was flanked by bogs. The English had already been marching under fire for a mile and on the ford itself a heavy artillery piece became stuck. This resulted in a widening gap between the vanguard and main body, but when the vanguard was ordered to turn back and close the gap, it was attacked by Tyrone and O'Donnell's waiting Irish force.

Bagenal's troops were 'put to the sword without resistance' and many of the English troops, especially the conscripts, panicked. Bagenal himself rode forward but was 'shot through his forehead' and the main body suffered the same slaughter as the vanguard.

For the English the battle was already lost, but worse was to come. Commands were given for an orderly retreat but one survivor described "Our retreat was more in disorder than our going on...the soldiers were so dismayed that from retiring they began to fall into a rout." The conscripts, "...were for the most part put to the sword" and hundreds of Irishmen in Bagenal's army now deserted to Tyrone and joined in the massacre. The English rearguard tried to move forward but was also attacked by 2,000 Irish infantrymen and 400 cavalry.

A retreat was barely secured by the surviving English captains and only 1,500-

Above: Tyrone makes a formal submission to the English after the suppression of his rebellion. Despite his revolt Tyrone kept his earldom and lands

2,000 troops made it back to the safety of Armagh and of those many were badly injured. The once proud army that had intended to relieve a starving and surrounding force now found itself taking shelter in Armagh's church with enough food for little over a week.

The Battle of Yellow Ford was the worst defeat ever inflicted on an English army by an Irish force. The English had casualties of over 800 killed (including 25-30 officers), 400 wounded and the desertion of over 300 Irish soldiers. The deserters even included two Englishmen who later claimed that Tyrone had bribed them with 20 shillings each to switch sides. Many more troops fled the battle or were declared missing and 11 English colours were lost. The Irish rebels lost around 200 killed and 600 wounded.

It was a humiliating English defeat and Ormonde was quick to blame the conscripts saying they "...came away most cowardly, casting from them their armour and weapons as soon as the rebels charged them." However, the real factor in the Irish victory was that Tyrone and O'Donnell had led their men with great skill. Even an English officer begrudgingly acknowledged, "the Irish are most ready, well disciplined, and as good marksmen as France, Flanders or Spain can show."

Most alarmingly, Dublin was now highly exposed. With the main English army in Ireland now destroyed, nothing stood between Tyrone and the Pale. If the Spanish decided to capitalise on Yellow Ford and send Tyrone reinforcements, the English position would be dire. The fearful lord justices in Dublin even sent the Earl a grovelling letter imploring him not to inflict "any further hurt."

However, Tyrone passed on the golden opportunity to destroy the English by allowing the

garrison at Blackwater Fort and the remnants of Bagenal's force at Armagh to retreat south east to Dundalk unmolested if they surrendered their equipment. The reason for this surprising decision was that Tyrone's spies informed him that the English were planning to land forces in his rear at Lough Foyle. The English cynically referred to Tyrone's leniency as a "merciless bounty" and despite failing to take Dublin, the rebellion began to spread beyond Ulster.

Bloodshed and Essex's arrival

Ulster was under total rebel control and Tyrone's operations expanded across Ireland. O'Donnell extended his control into Connacht while Tyrone's talented commanders Owen MacRory O'Moore and Richard Tyrrell led 2,000 rebels into Munster while torturing and killing any loyalists they caught. Despite his great victory at Yellow Ford, Tyrone preferred not to commit to pitched battles and his guerrilla tactics wore down further English expeditions sent against him, most notably under Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex.

Essex was the hot-tempered and impetuous favourite of Elizabeth during the 1590s and was extremely ambitious both as a soldier and politician. Obsessed with notions of honour, Essex's actual military achievements were mixed. He had captured Cadiz in 1596 but as second-in-command of the English fleet he had left England's coastline undefended during the Third Spanish Armada, while he chased treasure in the Azores.

Nevertheless, Essex still believed he was the most talented soldier in the kingdom and in the aftermath of Yellow Ford, he pushed to become lord lieutenant of Ireland. Elizabeth reluctantly acquiesced and on 27 March 1599, he left London commanding the largest force to leave

"THE SYMBOLIC MOMENT OF TYRONE'S DEFEAT CAME WHEN MOUNTJOY DESTROYED THE O'NEILL INAUGURATION STONE"

England during the Elizabethan era, consisting of 17,300 soldiers.

However, once Essex landed in Dublin his strategy to defeat Tyrone was lacklustre. Although he had planned a scorched-earth policy in Ulster, the Irish Privy Council persuaded him to relieve outposts in elsewhere while he waited for additional support to arrive for his Ulster campaign. Essex achieved no discernible results in the other provinces and by the time he finally marched on Ulster in September 1599 his support had not arrived and the fighting season had already passed. Consequently, despite all his boastful claims of military prowess, Essex was forced to negotiate with Tyrone.

The two commanders met at a river ford north of Dundalk in September 1599 with Tyrone "putting his horse up to the belly in water, with all humbleness." While Essex was "standing on the other bank" Tyrone claimed to seek peace with Elizabeth but the other demands are unknown as the two men later claimed different interpretations of the event.

Tyrone claimed that religious toleration in Ireland was permitted but Essex flatly denied it stating, "Toleration in religion was mentioned in deed, but never yielded." It was even said that Essex had said to Tyrone, "Hang thee up, thou carest for religion as much as my horse." Whatever was discussed, a six-week truce was agreed and Essex was disgraced. Elizabeth was furious and her former favourite rushed to England where he was eventually executed for treason in 1601.

The English vengeance

Following Essex's failure, the English appointed Charles Blount, Baron Mountjoy as lord deputy in February 1600 to continue the war against Tyrone. Mountjoy was given the resources denied to Essex and he proved to be a capable and ruthless commander. He implemented a scorched-earth policy in Munster and eventually Ulster that denied the rebels any opportunity to exploit the Irish terrain. He was well aware of the urgent need to decisively defeat Tyrone and the opportunity came in September 1601.

3,800 Spanish soldiers under the command of Don Juan del Aguila had landed at Kinsale in a belated attempt to help the rebels. The port was located in Cork, far away from Tyrone's Ulster heartland, but the Earl was nevertheless determined to link up with his Spanish allies.

Mountjoy swiftly moved to besiege the Spanish at Kinsale with 7,000 men and Tyrone's men marched across from Ulster in freezing conditions. On 24 December, the rebels met the English at the Battle of Kinsale in what proved to be the final major clash of the war.

Tyrone overconfidently deployed his troops in unfamiliar Spanish tercio formations and they broke ranks when the English launched a cavalry charge. The rebels suffered over 2,000 casualties and most of their weapons were abandoned

while the Spanish were forced to surrender and return home. The retreating rebels were offered no quarter and the English doggedly pursued them back to Ulster. The symbolic moment of Tyrone's defeat came when Mountjoy destroyed the O'Neill inauguration stone at Tullyhogue in September 1602. With that, the rebellion was effectively over.

Flight of the Earls

Tyrone unconditionally submitted to Mountjoy on his knees in March 1603, one week after Elizabeth I's death. Mountjoy concealed her death from Tyrone to prevent him seeking favourable terms. Nonetheless, Tyrone was surprisingly rehabilitated and although he had to renounce the title of 'O'Neill' and now owned devastated lands, he kept his earldom.

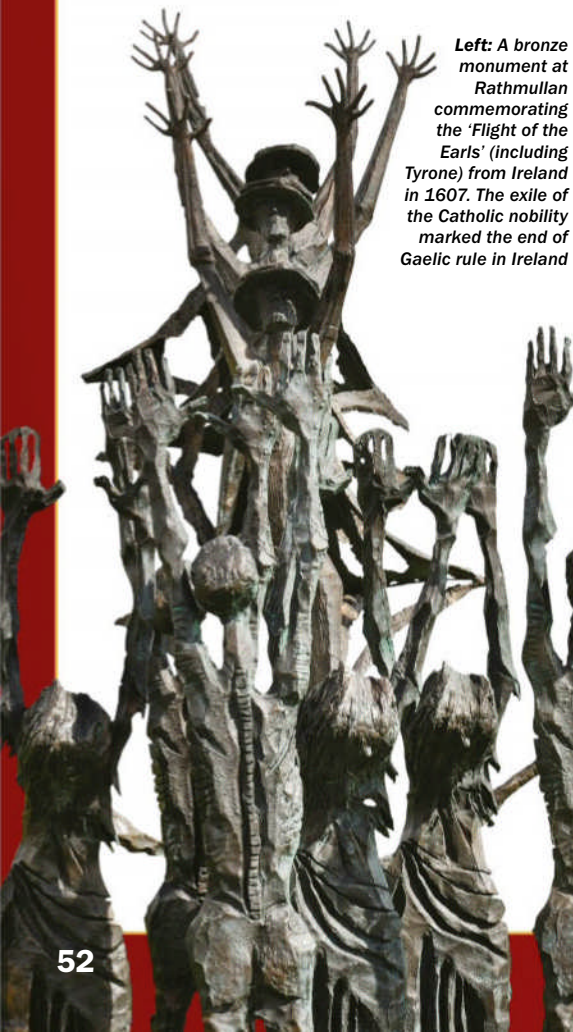
This was a remarkable diplomatic victory for Tyrone but he was dismayed by subsequent disputes over his lands with the English. Word eventually reached him that if he went to England to plead his case he would be arrested, so Tyrone decided to escape English rule. On 14 September 1607, he sailed from Rathmullan with O'Donnell and around 90 followers for Europe and because O'Donnell was Earl of Tyrconnell the event became known as the 'Flight of the Earls'.

Although it was a small event, Tyrone's self-imposed exile marked the end of the rule of Gaelic chieftains. The 'O'Neill' himself died of fever in Rome in 1616 but Ulster was utterly changed in the aftermath of his defeated rebellion. His lands were confiscated and divided between English and Scottish Protestants in what became known as the 'Plantation of Ulster': a social upheaval that dramatically turned a defiantly Catholic region into an equally defiant Protestant province.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of Tyrone's revolt and the Nine Years' War was not just the estimated hundreds of thousands of lives that were lost but that it also sparked a violent religious struggle that has claimed many more lives in the subsequent 400 years. Ireland, and Ulster in particular, is still living with this scarred legacy.

Right: Hugh O'Neill was the last of the powerful Gaelic Irish chieftains and is depicted as a larger than life warrior in this possible portrait from the Vatican

Left: A bronze monument at Rathmullan commemorating the 'Flight of the Earls' (including Tyrone) from Ireland in 1607. The exile of the Catholic nobility marked the end of Gaelic rule in Ireland



Images: Alamy

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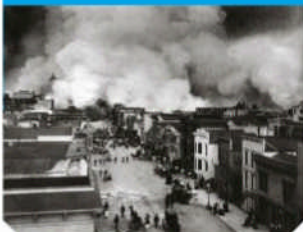
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Great Battles

WIMY RIDGE

After years of failed efforts, this infamously tricky position finally fell to Canadian forces, giving birth to a national legend

WORDS JONATHAN KRAUSE



ARTOIS APRIL–MAY 1917

Easter Monday, Arras, north-east France, 9 April 1917. After months of relative quiet during the cold winter of 1916-17, the British Army announced the return to the offensive with an artillery bombardment of nearly 2.7 million shells, focused on an area only 24 kilometres long. The operation was intended to be a feint, nothing more. Its objective was to pull German defences away from the river Aisne where the real fight, the Nivelle Offensive, would begin a week later.

British commanders, right up to Douglas Haig, commander-in-chief of the British army and newly-minted field marshal, could not have known the import that this battle would have for generations to come. At the time it was just another medium-sized campaign, an operation in support of the still larger and dominant French army. Haig himself was downright annoyed at having to fight battles like Arras at all. A year

earlier he had been asked by Joseph Joffre to carry out a series of small battles to hold German reserves on the British front and wear down German units before the battle of the Somme. At the time he wrote in his diary that, "... [the French] wished the British to commence attacking in end of April [1916] with the object of, they said, 'wearing out' the German reserves (a 'bataille d'usure' as they are pleased to call it) – while they intend to do nothing until the enemy's reserves had disappeared!"

Now in April 1917, Haig and the British Army once again found themselves launching small-to-medium operations not even in support of their French ally, but merely as a prelude to the French attack. Arras would be different, however; at least at the start. Unlike so many other battles of its size and dubious strategic importance, the clash would not be forgotten by later generations. Instead, it would be immortalised forever as the birthplace of a nation, thanks to the stunning advance of the Canadian Corps and their successful capture of one of the most daunting pieces of high ground on the Western Front: Vimy Ridge.

The path to the capture of Vimy Ridge was a long one. Twice in 1915 the best infantry and artillery in the French army struggled across the farmland and through the small villages that lead up there and they made three attempts to actually capture the ridge itself. One, on 9 May 1915, had come tantalisingly close to success. The Moroccan Division stormed the top of Vimy Ridge and desperately fought the German defenders there at close quarters for three whole days. Nevertheless, the attack failed.

Even if the French had not taken Vimy Ridge, they had succeeded in moving the line ever closer to its base, seeing it loom nearer and nearer, almost within reach. By the time the Canadians found themselves huddled in their jumping-off positions early on the morning of 9 April 1917, a great deal of work had been done to prepare the ground for their assault. They had dug 12 long tunnels to shelter the men as they waited for the attack. The longest of these was 1,883 yards long and altogether, the tunnels could shelter 25,000 men. The positions ensured that the men would be protected against German counter bombardment as they

"IT WOULD BE IMMORTALISED FOREVER AS THE BIRTHPLACE OF A NATION, THANKS TO THE STUNNING ADVANCE OF THE CANADIAN CORPS AND THEIR SUCCESSFUL CAPTURE OF ONE OF THE MOST DAUNTING PIECES OF HIGH GROUND ON THE WESTERN FRONT"



OPPOSING FORCES



**GREAT BRITAIN
& CANADA**

LEADERS Julian Byng,
Edmund Allenby,
Douglas Haig

INFANTRY 23 Divisions
GUNS 1,000 heavy

VS



GERMANY

LEADERS Ludwig von
Falkenhausen

INFANTRY 17 Divisions
GUNS >230 heavy

The Battle of Vimy Ridge by
Richard Jack c.1918, from
the Canadian War Museum

GREAT BATTLES

marched to their jumping-off positions, and significantly reduced the amount of open ground they would have to cover before closing with the German defenders and storming their trenches. The time was ripe, the men were ready and everything had been planned.

At 5.30am on the day of the attack, British and Canadian forces surged over the top and towards their varied objectives. The weather was appalling – a heavy snowstorm lumbered over north-east France and had not let up by the time the attack went in. The weather made conditions miserable, but also severely disoriented the Germans who could not be sure when the attack would come, just as had been the case in May 1915 when heavy rains had granted surprise to the Moroccan Division and Barbot's 77th.

At 5.45am, British and Canadian guns inundated German artillery batteries with dense clouds of poison gas. The tactic invented by the French at Artois two years earlier was used to deadly effect on 9 April 1917. Unlike the French in 1915, however, the British and Canadians had developed highly sophisticated means of spotting and ranging enemy batteries, through sound ranging and flash spotting. These techniques relied on artillery observers in trenches keeping track of the sound of enemy guns and any muzzle-flares they happened to see. Through sophisticated deduction and mathematical calculation, this information could be used to eventually pinpoint the location of enemy batteries.

The work of observers and mathematicians was facilitated by artillery action intended to keep enemy batteries in place. Rather than immediately inundate newly discovered enemy batteries, the positions were catalogued, shared with other friendly batteries and then subjected to a fire regime intended above all else to keep the enemy battery stationary and accounted for. A known battery could be taken out on the day of the attack. Tightly packed enemy batteries were especially vulnerable to neutralisation by poison gas, making them relatively easy to silence when it mattered most.

So, instead of engaging batteries directly in the early days of April 1917, British and Canadian batteries focused more so on the German road network, making it more difficult for the batteries to be resupplied, and even more difficult for them to relocate.

As the battle neared, the British and Canadian artillery plan shifted and began to focus on observation posts, telephone exchanges, supply dumps and enemy artillery headquarters. By 1917, the Entente powers had learned that there were many ways to neutralise enemy artillery. They could be inundated with shrapnel, high explosives or poison gas. They could also be cut off from their communications network (and thus unable to respond to any Entente attack), or they could simply be cut off from resupply and slowly starved of ammunition. As long as the guns could be silenced, it hardly mattered.

Thanks to the tireless work of well-trained artillerymen, pilots and staff officers, British and Canadian gunners knew the precise locations of 86 per cent of the German batteries before 9 April (a total of 212 German guns). Thanks to this knowledge, the Entente artillery effectively silenced almost the entirety of the German artillery protecting Vimy Ridge before 6am on 9

Canadian troops of the 19th Infantry Battalion consolidating positions on the Ridge during the Battle of Vimy Ridge



“TIGHTLY PACKED ENEMY BATTERIES WERE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO NEUTRALISATION BY POISON GAS, MAKING THEM RELATIVELY EASY TO SILENCE WHEN IT MATTERED MOST”



“BY 1.18PM, THE CANADIANS HAD DONE IT. VIMY RIDGE WAS IN THEIR HANDS AFTER AN ADVANCE OF 3.7 KILOMETRES AND AT A COST OF 11,000 CASUALTIES”

29th Infantry Battalion advancing over No Man's Land through the German barbed wire and heavy fire during the battle of Vimy Ridge



April 1917. This was especially impressive given the aerial dominance of German forces in spring 1917. Superior training and the introduction of the new Albatross D.II and D.III fighter aircraft had given the Germans a serious advantage in the air. This advantage was amplified by the fact that the Royal Flying Corps, under Hugh Trenchard, had committed to an aggressive posture of scouting, strafing and bombing positions under German airspace.

As a result, the German fighters could operate over their own territory, meaning any forced landings or survived crashes saw German pilots recovered by their own infantry. British pilots who went down and survived became prisoners. The poor loiter time of aircraft of the period also meant that British squadrons were frequently forced to disengage and begin the flight home when petrol ran low. British pilots would have no choice but to head back to British lines, pursued by hungry German pilots who did not have the same fuel constraints, operating, as they were, closer to their own airfields.

Fortunately for Canadian infantrymen, the scientific evolution of range-finding in the British army had made aerial reconnaissance less important than it had been in discovering enemy batteries in the past. The detailed knowledge of enemy battery positions earned by the careful work of British army artillerymen, plus the support of 337 heavy guns trained on an area only six kilometres wide, meant that British and Canadian batteries could swamp their German counterparts with neutralising fire. Most of the German batteries were neutralised during the critical initial phase of the battle, shielding the Canadian Corps from the withering artillery fire that had cut down the three previous French attempts to capture Vimy.

As the British and Canadians surged out of their forward positions, they advanced behind one of the most sophisticated artillery barrages ever fired during the war on the Western Front. In some sectors, smoke shells were added to the rolling barrage to help obscure the vision of

German defenders. The 9th (Scottish) Division did this, even though it was technically against official guidelines, and it helped them make one of the most stunning advances of the war: 5.6 kilometres, the longest advance by any division on the Western Front to date.

The rolling barrages across the front were carefully thought out, responsive and tailored to the needs and peculiarities of each individual part of the front. One need in particular was neutralising German machine-guns who had developed new tactical approaches during the winter of 1916-17.

Instead of massing in forward positions, many German machine gun crews were now sited a few hundred metres back from the frontline. This removed them from the most intensely bombarded sections of the German defensive zone and also enabled them to open fire once the Entente forces had gone over the top, chewing significant holes in any advance. They could do so because being sited further back meant that the rolling barrage would take more time to reach them, giving the German crews more time to emerge from their dugouts and begin firing.

The British and Canadian forces responded to this tactical development by increasing the depth of the rolling barrage, and also mixing in a wider range of artillery (thus increasing the number of guns that could be brought to bear). While the British and Canadian response did not silence German machine guns entirely, they went a long way to reducing their efficacy in the critical opening minutes of the battle.

By 1.18pm, the Canadians had done it. Vimy Ridge was in their hands after an advance of 3.7 kilometres and at the cost of 11,000 casualties. In places the Canadians had progressed so far, and so quickly, they actually captured German artillery, turned the guns around, and used them to fire on disorganised German defenders (a feat that the Canadians had

been expressly trained to do in the build-up to the attack).

The German defences that the Canadians overran were in a pitiful state – the carefully laid out German trench lines had almost everywhere been completely flattened. Instead of trenches, German defenders were left defending a series of unconnected, or loosely connected, shell holes. German dugouts had been caved in, making even these normally safe refuges increasingly dangerous. This forced German defenders above ground, where they were even more susceptible to the awesome firepower brought to bear against them.

The position the German defenders found themselves in was extremely fraught, to say the least. Nevertheless, they managed to make a bad position even worse for themselves through mismanagement and shockingly poor command decisions in the face of overwhelmingly superior British and Canadian firepower.

Opposite the Canadians, Sixth Army held the German defences under the command of General Ludwig von Falkenhausen, who had been in the Arras sector since September 1916. His previous experience had mostly been in Lorraine commanding a relatively quiet sector for most of the war. He spent most of 1916 leading the

Marching to the front, alongside a British Mark IV tank, during the Battle of Arras



A great naval gun being fired by the Canadians in the direction of Vimy Ridge



Left: 'Canada bereft'. The embodiment of Canada weeps for her fallen soldiers, overlooking the Doauai plains

“MOST OF THE GERMAN BATTERIES WERE NEUTRALISED DURING THE CRITICAL INITIAL PHASE OF THE BATTLE, SHIELDING THE CANADIAN CORPS FROM THE WITHERING ARTILLERY FIRE THAT HAD CUT DOWN THE THREE PREVIOUS FRENCH ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE VIMY”

The Canadian memorial at Vimy Ridge. One of the most impressive war memorials anywhere in the world



“THESE TROOPS CAME UP IN THE SECONDARY WAVES OF INFANTRY, SPECIALLY ARMED WITH KNIVES, EXTRA GRENADES AND REVOLVERS. THEY WERE TRAINED IN THE DEADLY BUSINESS OF CLOSE-COMBAT FIGHTING IN THE RAT WARREN OF ENEMY TRENCHES THAT ASSAULT TROOPS HAD ALREADY ROLLED OVER IN THE INITIAL WAVES”



VIMY RIDGE

*Canadians breaking through German
barbed wire entanglements in the
taking of Vimy Ridge, April 1917*





Squads of machine gunners operate from shell-craters in support of the infantry on the plateau above the ridge



Some of the trenches at Vimy, which have been preserved



coastal batteries at Hamburg and then sitting the quiet sector of Arras while the battles of the Somme and Verdun raged to his south. Perhaps because of his lack of experience he failed to understand the changing character of warfare on the Western Front. Most notably, he did not implement the careful defence-in-depth posture advocated by General Erich von Ludendorff, who, along with Paul von Hindenburg, was in command of the German Army.

Ludendorff understood that the Germans were at a severe manpower disadvantage. Rather than place all of his men in forward trenches to be ground out by Entente artillery, surrounded by advancing Entente infantry practicing ever-increasingly sophisticated infantry tactics, he imagined a system where the Germans would create a vast, elastic defensible zone.

Only a bare minimum of defenders would be placed in forward positions to limit the number of casualties that could be sustained in the opening phase of the battle. Entente forces were to be allowed to penetrate this thin outer crust and advance a kilometre or more to the real line of German defence. Here, well-organised and well-rested German defenders, largely spared from the worst of the Entente's artillery preparation, would decisively defeat the tired and disorganised Entente troops as they came into range.

The elastic defence-in-depth was a brilliant idea that very rarely worked as intended in the field; it was simply too complicated and required immense levels of training and morale at all

levels of the army. Nevertheless, Falkenhausen's plan to place the bulk of his forces on the crest of Vimy Ridge, completely out of keeping with the new German defensive plans, was totally inappropriate. He had massed his men at the heaviest point of British and Canadian artillery fire, the exact opposite of what Ludendorff's new tactics were designed to achieve.

The Canadians had been carefully trained in modern combined-arms tactics and were supported by modern artillery, tanks, aircraft and an unusually high concentration of machine guns. The Canadian brigades had 80 guns each, and every platoon had a section of Lewis guns (light, portable machine guns) to provide close fire-support to the riflemen as they advanced.

Through the bitterly cold winter, the Canadians had practiced taking Vimy Ridge. They studied detailed models of the terrain and enemy positions. They rehearsed the battle again and again. As a result, even fighting through a bitter snowstorm, surrounded by the din of battle, bullets and shells firing in every direction, the men of the Canadian Corps did not falter, get lost or head in the wrong direction. This intense and careful training helped immensely on the day.

In addition to rehearsing specifically for Vimy, the Canadians benefitted from changes to British infantry doctrine that came about as a result of their experience during the Battle of the Somme. In this sense, Canadians' experience was not entirely different to that of the French two years earlier. In May 1915, the French attacked with a new doctrine that gave them a

temporary tactical advantage over the Germans. Issued in April 1915, the doctrine, 'But et conditions d'une action offensive d'ensemble (Note 5779)' laid out the foundations of trench warfare for the rest of the war, such as the importance of a rolling barrage, proscriptions for how to best neutralise or destroy enemy defences with artillery and the introduction of what we would now call 'infiltration tactics', a system of training and organising waves of attacking infantry to maximise and maintain their forward momentum.

In April 1917, the Canadians benefitted from their own doctrinal overhaul, SS 143 Instructions for the Offensive Training of Platoons for Offensive Action 1917. Initially released in February 1917, SS 143 marked a major turning point for the doctrine and tactics of the British and Commonwealth forces in WWI. It was a refinement and a distillation of all the lessons that British forces had learned during 1916 as they struggled and staggered through the difficult Somme offensive.

In many ways, SS 143 echoed the proscriptions of Note 5779, albeit in substantially more detail and with a great deal more sophistication. As with Note 5779, SS 143 placed an emphasis on the importance of having assault troops bypass enemy strong points, leaving them to be dealt with by 'moppers up'. These troops came up in the secondary waves of infantry, specially armed with knives, extra grenades and revolvers, and trained in the deadly business of close-combat fighting in the



Canadian soldiers sit in a devastated German gun emplacement on the crest of Vimy Ridge

“EVEN FIGHTING THROUGH A BITTER SNOWSTORM, SURROUNDED BY THE DIN OF BATTLE, BULLETS AND SHELLS FIRING IN EVERY DIRECTION, THE MEN OF THE CANADIAN CORPS DID NOT FALTER”

rat warren of enemy trenches that assault troops had already rolled over in the initial waves.

SS 143 goes much deeper, however, in splitting up platoons into small, semi-autonomous squads of six to ten men that were specially trained and armed with either Lewis guns, rifle-grenades or other specialist weaponry. Rather than a mass of undifferentiated infantrymen, the armed forces imagined by SS 143 were composed overwhelmingly of specialists occupying a dizzying array overlapping skill sets and utilities working together in a complex orchestra.

They worked together to maximise firepower, maintain forward momentum and rely on skill, training and expertise for success, rather than relying on just the sheer weight of steel and flesh that the British and Commonwealth forces could throw at the enemy. The battle of Arras, and the capture of Vimy Ridge, was not just a critical moment in the birth of the Canadian nation, it was also a milestone on the path to creating fully modern, professional, differentiated infantry fighting forces.

The attempts made by the Entente to capture Vimy Ridge in 1915 and 1917 offer an interesting and cogent parallel to the war as a whole. The Entente, as usual, had the strategic

imperative to attack and repel the German defenders from key pieces of high ground. This was the basic tactical paradigm up and down the front throughout the war; a result of the German retreat after the first Battle of the Marne in 1914 (the Germans had the luxury of choosing where to stop their retreat, and chose to maintain every key piece of high ground possible).

When thinking about WWI, people immediately think of the trenches, mud, massed artillery fire and machine guns. These were all, of course, ubiquitous and constituted the principal obstacles that the Entente had to overcome if they were going to successfully attack the Germans and drive them from occupied France and Belgium.

People often forget, however, that it was not simply a matter of attacking over flat land into well-organised German trench networks. The German terrain dominance was a significant advantage enjoyed for most of the war in all of the critical sectors (Artois, Ypres, Champagne, the Aisne, etc). It drastically reduced their need to rely on aerial reconnaissance to observe artillery fire, gave them easy observation over Allied lines (so they could generally spot troop build-ups and the frenetic trench digging that

signalled an up-coming attack), and also shielded their own trenches from Entente (and later Allied) observation in turn. It posed a significant challenge that the Entente could only eventually master through a mixture of excellent aerial observation and liaison and the development of novel methods of tracking enemy movements and deployments (such as sound-ranging and flash-spotting).

Both 1915 and 1917 also point to a deeper, systemic reality of the fighting on the Western Front during World War I. No matter how skilled, how well-trained and how tactically fine-tuned a force was, any advantage it might gain would only be temporary. Both 9 May 1915 and 9 April 1917 saw stunning advances by the 77th and Moroccan divisions, and later by the Canadian Corps and the 9th (Scottish) division. Their success was breath taking, but short-lived. Both Second Artois and Arras degenerated into long, attritional slugging matches whose impetus died down almost as quickly as it seemed to rise up. There was no silver bullet that could give any formation a permanent tactical advantage on the Western Front.

FURTHER READING

🔗 **AT THE SHARP END: CANADIANS FIGHTING IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914-1916** BY TIM COOK

🔗 **THE FIRST WORLD WAR A NEW ILLUSTRATED HISTORY** BY HEW STRACHAN

Tibet

Unchecked Chinese aggression turned this Buddhist theocracy into a buffer state. Is there still hope for its freedom?

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

Emerging victorious after the greatest civil war in history, Mao Zedong and his commanders set about assembling a new China they hoped would become a global power. The complicit Soviets had bequeathed Manchuria and a great swathe of Mongolia to the newly created People's Republic in 1949 and there were further promises of generous economic assistance from Stalin.

To the east, in North Korea, a former Soviet commando named Kim Il-sung was laying the groundwork for a different brand of despotic nation building. These sudden changes in the most populous corner of the world meant, for the first time ever, the Eurasian landmass was dominated by the heirs of Marx and Lenin.

For the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), whose numbers had swelled to 5 million strong, the easy conquest of East Turkestan was good enough practice at its new modus. No longer a ragtag guerrilla force, the PLA was armed to the teeth with Soviet, Japanese and captured American arms. Its troops were highly motivated and possessed superb discipline.

Barely a year since they drove Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang to Formosa, the PLA was mobilising in Sichuan for their latest endeavour: the annexation of Tibet.

To this day, historians remain intrigued by the reasons for China's belligerent ambitions in the Himalayas. The desire to exploit resources, like timber and coal, are insufficient casus belli since raw materials were in abundance throughout the Chinese heartland and its periphery.

If one should try to imagine a grand strategy with Chinese characteristics, however, it does make sense how the Tibetan Plateau – ringed with mountains and commanding the source

of five great Asian rivers – forms an attractive appendage to a geopolitical behemoth in Asia. There's historical precedence as well. For the past several hundred years, Tibetans were recognised by Chinese rulers as willing subjects. Now that the Communists were in power, the new regime was determined to continue the policy.

This is what compelled Chinese propaganda organs to drum up awareness about oncoming military adventures in the beginning of 1950. Radio broadcasts included tirades against Anglo-American imperialism and the importance of seizing Formosa (Taiwan), Hainan Island, and 'liberating' Tibet even if it had been an independent country since 1912.

The conquest ultimately fell to the PLA's Southwest Military District in Sichuan Province. According to plans drawn up by two veteran commanders, Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping, a massive pincer movement into the Kham region would annihilate the only credible resistance the Tibetans could muster: a handful of ill-equipped regiments commanded by Lhalu Tsewang Dorje, a Tibetan aristocrat and politician who was simultaneously field marshal and defence minister. This pitiful army, and its .303 Lee Enfields, was based in the town of Chamdo, the region's capital.

While the politicians in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa vainly solicited aid from India and the US State Department, the PLA spent weeks preparing its troops for gruelling marches on mountain trails and hearts-and-minds operations. Chinese soldiers were instructed on local customs and habits. They were forbidden from harassing civilians, as well as desecrating temples and monasteries.

A memorandum was circulated titled 'Three General Rules and Eight Things To Keep In Mind'.

A Tibetan man is detained by Nepali police wielding bamboo riot batons during a pro-Tibet peace protest near UN offices in Kathmandu



NATION OF DIVINITY

1578

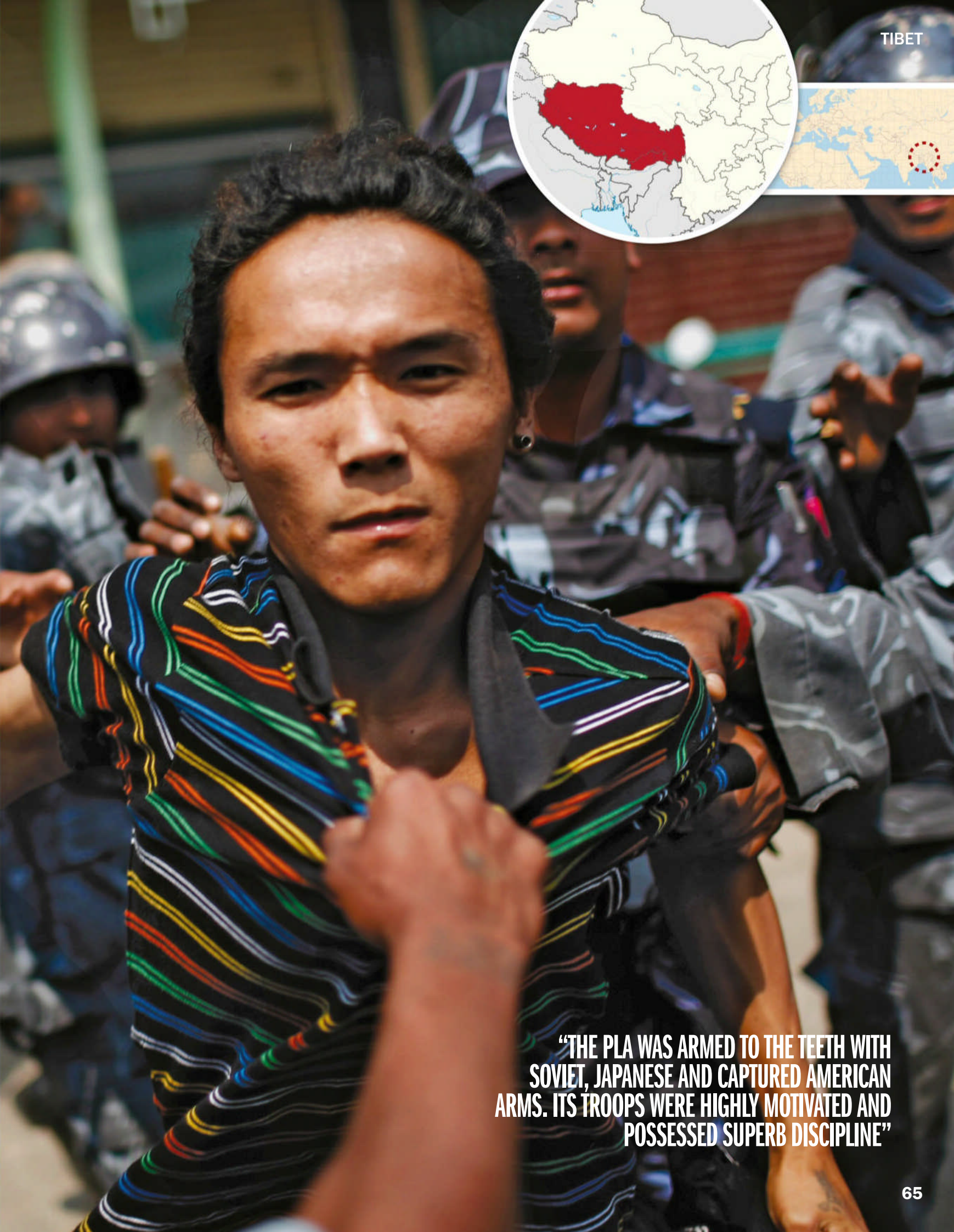
The Mongol warlord Altan Khan bestows the rank 'Dalai Lama' on Sonam Gyatso, who becomes the third Tibetan ruler to carry the title; his two predecessors are recognised as the original Lamas.

1792

The Qing Dynasty carries out repeated military expeditions to Tibet. The last of which is to repel an invading Gurkha army. A Qing garrison remains in the capital, Lhasa.

1904

Worried about Russian influence spreading across Central Asia, the British adventurer Major Francis Younghusband leads a force of 3,000 men to subdue Tibet; they return to India burdened with loot.



“THE PLA WAS ARMED TO THE TEETH WITH SOVIET, JAPANESE AND CAPTURED AMERICAN ARMS. ITS TROOPS WERE HIGHLY MOTIVATED AND POSSESSED SUPERB DISCIPLINE”

These pointers, 11 in total, made it clear that PLA soldiers, “cannot take even one needle from the masse” and “must not tease or bother females,” among other restrictions.

A small incursion in July 1950 was enough to rattle the Tibetans. Thousands of PLA shock troops attempted a reconnaissance in force near Chamdo but were repelled by the local garrison, whose response was hastened by an embedded British radio operator named R Ford.

The importance of Chamdo was paramount for Tibet’s survival. Should it fall, the mountain trails to Lhasa would be open and indefensible. In October 1950, the PLA crossed the upper Yangtze River at two points and encircled Chamdo. The fighting was done in two weeks and the Tibetan leadership pleaded for aid from India, as well as the United Nations and the Americans, knowing their days were numbered.

To elicit more sympathy on the world stage just when the Korean War erupted, Lhasa’s officialdom hastened the ascension of the 14th Dalai Lama, a 16-year-old designated as the reincarnation of his predecessor. It didn’t matter – Tibet was doomed.

The birth of Tibet

Some 200 million years before the rise of human civilisation, a great landmass began a slow drift northward until it collided with a massive tectonic plate. This is how geologists understand the formation of the Himalayas at present.

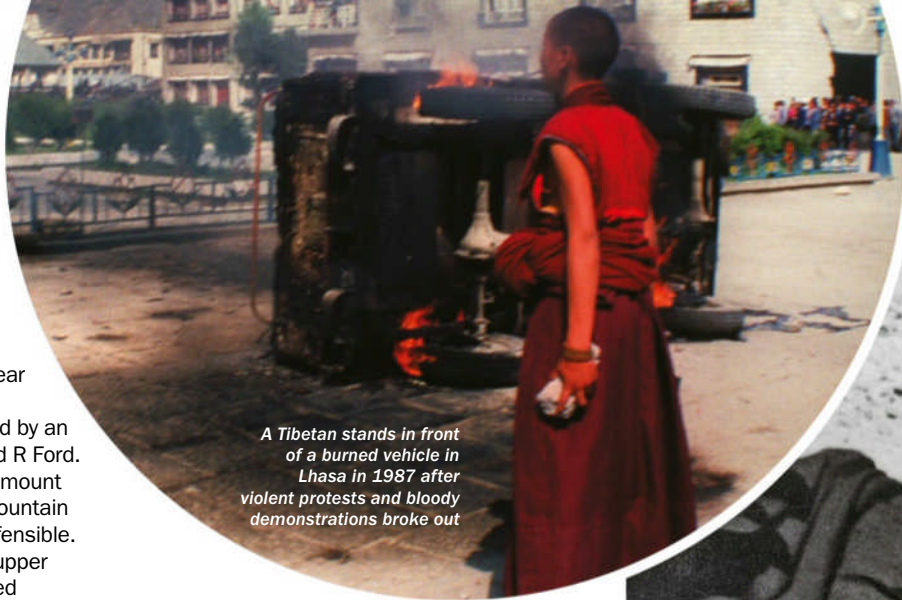
In their view, the resulting crust smothered any volcanic activity in the Indian subcontinent and drove mountain peaks higher than at any point on record. This climactic formation created a rupture extending from central China until the Pamirs in Tajikistan and produced one of the harshest climates on Earth.

Yet at its core there came to be a vast plateau locked in glacier and frost. Remarkably, this forbidding land would be home for one of the world’s most peculiar nations.

The origins of the Tibetans can be traced to nomadic pastoralist tribes. In 7CE, a powerful empire was established by the warlord Songtsen Gampo. His reign marked the beginning of the wars between various Himalayan kingdoms and the Han civilisations, manifested in continuous Chinese dynasties, that emerged in the Yangtze Delta.

Songtsen Gampo’s own Yarlung Dynasty wasn’t blessed with staying power, but it did bequeath Buddhism to his realm. He married two foreign wives, one Nepalese and the other Chinese, who each compelled him to patronise the philosophy.

The ensuing several hundred years saw the rise of Tibet’s spiritual-religious complex, where enormous holy palaces rose on hills and crests to house entire monastic orders. It was in the



A Tibetan stands in front of a burned vehicle in Lhasa in 1987 after violent protests and bloody demonstrations broke out

13th century when the Yuan Dynasty under Kublai Khan legitimised the Tibetan Lamas and allowed them to spread their faith to Mongolia.

It was another Mongol ruler, Altan Khan, who helped create the exalted individuals ranked as ‘oceans of wisdom’ or Dalai Lamas. At this point, Tibet was already known as a religious epicentre where aristocrats from either side of the Himalayas bankrolled semi-remote monasteries and shrines. So from the 16th century, an uninterrupted line of absolute rulers commanded the greatest rank and privilege in Tibetan society.

While the idea of a country populated by selfless monks devoted to prayer does stir the imagination, Tibet’s religious orders made their country isolated, backward and susceptible to meddling by foreign powers.

This process began during the Manchu or Qing Dynasty. The powerful monastic orders – including the elite Gulug or Yellow Hats who monopolised the Dalai Lama – saw no use for maintaining armies, which meant Tibet’s borders remained lawless and open to invasion. As a result, Manchu troops were dispatched to Lhasa and this gave the Qing emperors considerable leverage over the Tibetans.

The institution of the Dalai Lama itself was flawed. The ‘tulku’ system meant each monastic order had to find the human reincarnation of its previous leader. This meant young boys were taken from their families and groomed for the role until their 18th birthday. The same applied to the selection of the Dalai Lama, but these young men were often supplanted by intrigues or scheming regents; four young Dalai Lamas died in succession during the 19th century. At its worst, Tibet’s politics were just as violent and corrupt as any despotism.

Over 300 years, Tibet’s monasteries grew into huge agricultural estates supported by an indentured peasantry while the Dalai Lama enjoyed the wealth accorded by the privileges of his office. As both spiritual and temporal leader, he could levy taxes, craft policy and reap profits from trade.



1911

Zealous reformists launch the revolution that topples the Qing Dynasty. China enters an uncertain period of republican democracy as the new government struggles to modernise social institutions amid the chaos.

1913

With China unravelling and threatened by foreign powers, Tibet and Mongolia sign a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance to preserve their cultural ties. Both countries enjoy an era of near-total independence.

1933

The 13th Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso, passes away in December after a spell of illness. Two regents govern Tibet for more than a decade until a 14th Dalai Lama is agreed on.



1949

In the years following WWII China descends into civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communists, who emerge victorious. Chairman Mao prepares his legions to reclaim ‘historic’ Chinese lands.



Tibet's small army lacked the arms and training to resist the Chinese in 1950



“SOCIETAL NORMS WERE FAR FROM JUST, AND EYE GOUGING, AMONG OTHER CRUEL PUNISHMENTS, WAS OFTEN METED TO MALEFACTORS”

Tibet's benign theocracy was far from kind to its subjects. Peasant families were burdened by rents, quotas and the expectation to surrender their male children to monasteries. A thriving slave market existed for local aristocrats. Societal norms were far from just, and eye gouging, among other cruel punishments, was often meted to malefactors.

By the time Tibet reached the 20th century it was a remote and backward nation with a populace steeped in ignorance and ruled by a narrow-minded religious caste.

“Religion is poison”

Tibet's last true ruler was the 13th Dalai Lama, whose reign extended from 1895 to 1933. His time in office saw furtive steps made towards modernisation, none of which had a meaningful impact. This despite four decades of total independence after the Qing Dynasty's collapse in 1911 and its replacement by a chaos-wracked Chinese republic.

A string of reformers who sought to rule Tibet after the 13th Dalai Lama's passing achieved little. Neither did a brief regency that spanned WWII until the conflict with China. One of the most glaring failures of these regimes was Tibet's inescapable helplessness. In 1936 a British adviser, Brigadier Neame, authored a scathing assessment of Tibet's attempts at raising an army.

“All their thoughts and energies are devoted to their religious life,” he wrote. “The Tibetan government has absolutely no idea of military organisation, administration or training. The troops are untrained, unreliable and unpopular with the country.”

“It is justifiable to say that... the army has advanced but little from its condition in 1904,” Neame concluded.

It is not surprising then, how badly the Tibetans fared in their defence of Chamdo when the PLA invaded. What was apparent to the Chinese, who were fully aware of their adversaries' backwardness, was that they could further exploit Tibet's weaknesses by cultivating sympathisers among Buddhist monks and the peasantry.

In May 1951, emissaries of the newly installed Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, visited Peking to smoothen relations with the Maoist regime. The group was received by no less than Zhou Enlai, China's urbane premier and savviest diplomat, and Zhu De, the commander of the PLA. The resulting conference produced the tombstone for Tibetan independence. It was called the ‘17-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet’ and it stipulated, with shocking frankness, the ways Tibet was to be subsumed by China as an autonomous province. Its final point was the most jarring, as it read: “This agreement shall come into force immediately after signatures and seals are affixed to it.”

1951

With Tibet conquered by the PLA 18th Army in 1950, a 17-Point Plan for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet is agreed upon to guarantee autonomous governance over the now occupied Lamaist state.

1955

To improve ties with Tibet's new overlords, the 19-year-old Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, meets with Chairman Mao and his inner circle. The Dalai Lama realises his world view is irreconcilable with Communism.



1957

The American CIA begins a covert program to train and equip Khampas and members of the Tibetan nobility. Nepal becomes their staging ground and secret airlifts are soon carried out.

1959

Fearing for his safety after a brutal Chinese crackdown, the Dalai Lama and his entourage flee Lhasa in March. They are met by Indian soldiers at the border and brought to Dharamsala.

1962

The PLA launches a surprise attack on Arunachal Pradesh near Bhutan in late October. Indian forces are unprepared and ill-equipped for defending the inhospitable terrain. Hostilities end on 20 November.

A subsequent conference in 1955, this time between the young Dalai Lama and Chairman Mao himself, shattered any pretence of autonomy for Tibet. Mao told his guest, “religion is poison. It has two great defects.” He went on to explain that, “It undermines the race and it retards the progress of the country.” In no uncertain terms, Mao threatened to wipe out Tibet’s monastic tradition, however, this was already being fulfilled, as thousands of monasteries were demolished by Chinese troops before the Dalai Lama fled in 1959, when he escaped Lhasa incognito with his bodyguards and was received by soldiers of the 5 Assam Rifles in Indian-controlled Arunachal Pradesh.

The Dalai Lama’s escape was abetted by another ally, the Central Intelligence Agency. Believing the Tibetan cause could help stop the spread of communism in Asia, a secret program named CIRCUS was launched in the mid-1950s to train vetted Tibetans for guerrilla war against the Chinese. This operation was carried out from Nepal and East Pakistan to sustain a guerrilla enclave within Tibet called the Kingdom of Mustang. Preparations for secret airdrops were done in Camp Hale, a remote US Army base in the Colorado mountains.

The highlight of this secret war was an ambush on a Chinese convoy that killed a ranking officer. Tibetan guerrillas retrieved a trove of documents that, when given to American handlers, proved to be an intelligence bonanza revealing China’s fraying ties with the Soviet Union.

But the CIA-backed guerrilla movement ultimately failed. Tibet’s climate was too rough for sustained covert operations. Those recruited to the program were members of the Lamaist aristocracy who had fled from the Chinese. Questionable soldiers at best, they had little support from the local populace, and material and financial assistance to the rebel movement eventually ended by the 1970s.

Forward policy

One of the most foreboding communiqués to emerge from Tibet’s downfall was delivered to India’s Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1950. “If Tibet is ruined this will result in great danger for the other countries of East Asia and in particular India,” it read. “If India and China share a border in Tibet then you will have to permanently maintain hundreds of thousands of troops there and this will be a great hardship for India. “So please,” it warned, “...think about the long term future.”

Although India sold arms and provided financial aid to Tibet, Nehru was a staunch believer that peaceful co-existence, rather than simmering conflict, was the best way forward when dealing with China. Yet 12 years after China imposed its will on its weakest neighbour, India bore the brunt of what the Tibetans warned them about.



Tibet’s remoteness meant Chinese forces faced very little opposition on their march to Lhasa



A Tibetan refugee protests against the occupation of Tibet as Chinese-made goods burn behind him

“CHINA’S MESSAGE TO DELHI WAS CLEAR ENOUGH THOUGH; PEKING DECIDES WHERE ITS TERRITORY BEGINS AND ENDS”

1966

After years of failed economic policies Chairman Mao begins a cultural revolution to purge his real and imagined enemies. The fallout leaves thousands of loyal Communists dead or imprisoned.

1972

With China now a rival of the Soviet Union, the Nixon administration plans to rebuild ties between Washington and Peking. The CIA cuts off clandestine support for the Tibetan resistance.



1980

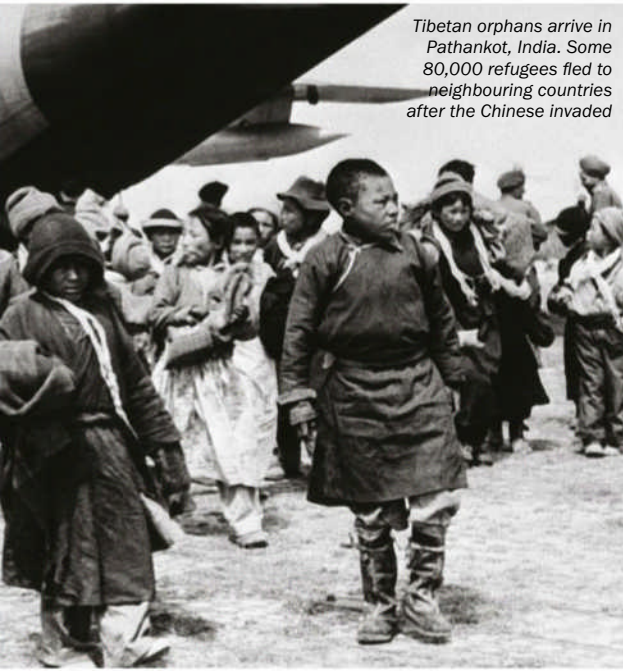
As the Chinese economy opens up, the Communist Party draws plans for developing Tibet’s infrastructure and encourages Han Chinese to migrate and settle in the sparsely populated frontier region.

1987

Migrants start arriving in Tibet where they gravitate to towns and cities. Since 1950, some 200,000 Han Chinese soldiers, workers, teachers, and settlers had lived and worked in Tibet.

1989

Facing unrest in the form of a pro-democracy movement led by students, martial law is imposed on Tibet to quell further protests by the local population.



Tibetan orphans arrive in Pathankot, India. Some 80,000 refugees fled to neighbouring countries after the Chinese invaded



On October 1962, soldiers of the 1 Sikh Regiment were encircled by Chinese forces. They were stationed as part of a 'Forward Policy' orchestrated by Delhi to establish where India's Himalayan borders ought to be. In Arunachal Pradesh, these followed the colonial-era McMahon Line. The Chinese thought otherwise.

The resulting battle lasted days but the lone outpost was overrun after reinforcements were unable to reach its location. When Delhi learned about the extent of the Chinese incursion, a pall hung over its ministers. The situation on the ground was grim, with only a few regiments deployed in Arunachal Pradesh – a stretch of ungoverned territory neighbouring Bhutan – and should this be lost the entire Assam region would be threatened.

Meanwhile in Kashmir, Chinese troops had cordoned off the remote Aksai Chin with ease. This meant that over the course of 48 hours, Peking had broken away whole pieces of India without consequence. No wonder then that a fuming Nehru, fresh from a visit to Sri Lanka, told his country's press, "I have ordered the army to throw the Chinese out!"

The bluster did little to change the course of events on the ground. Using the same tactics as their earlier offensives against the Tibetans and UN forces in Korea, the PLA massed near the border and launched surprise attacks to encircle and overwhelm their objectives. Despite stiff resistance from small Indian units – on one occasion a single Sikh platoon held back an entire battalion – the Chinese prevailed, paused and then withdrew on 20 November after reports that military aid was being delivered to India by the US and UK. China's message to Delhi was clear enough though: Peking decides where its territory begins and ends.

The month-long 1962 war has since sunk into semi-obscurity everywhere but in India, where its outcome is considered a defeat that still rankles. For decades after, aside from the futile efforts of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, Tibet remained unassailable and under complete Chinese control.

Tibet isn't a burden for China, whose economy continues to grow seven per cent each year, nor does it threaten Beijing's grip on domestic security. There are far too few Tibetans, their population is now at 3 million people and a constant flow of investment has kept the region from sliding into extreme poverty. Besides, China is a generous occupier. During the 1990s, for example, Tibet received almost 1 billion dollars in aid that went to building schools, apartments and roads. The tempo of development has grown by volumes since.

Tibet matters to China for as long as its leaders believe that the Tibetans, along with hundreds of other ethnic minorities, are inseparable citizens of the People's Republic. Of course, the Tibetans don't have their freedom but there's nothing that the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile can do about that either.

The most worrying aspect of the Tibet question is its role in a future confrontation involving India and China. The fact of the matter is, from Kashmir until Arunachal Pradesh, the boundaries separating either country are muddled.

Both China and India are poised to seize the commanding heights of the global economy by 2050, perhaps sooner. If their governments can't peacefully reconcile, then a war over Tibet is a likelihood when Asia's scariest confrontation turns hot.

A DANGEROUS BORDER

China's annexation of Tibet created an unforeseen consequence for its South Asian neighbour, India. The 1962 war over Arunachal Pradesh forced both countries to militarise a 3,225-kilometre frontier along the rim of the Himalayas. Should relations ever deteriorate between the two giants, a full-blown war over towering ridges and majestic valleys is almost certain.



2017

This year is the 58th anniversary of Tibetan uprising in 1959. China marks the occasion by holding military parades to advertise its control over Tibet. At least 100,000 Tibetans live in exile around the world.



Images: Alamy, Getty

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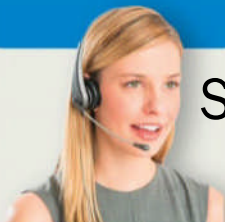
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SPECIAL FORCES BERLIN: PART 2

18-year-old Peter Fechter bled to death after he was shot by Communist forces, while trying to escape East Berlin. Neither side wanted to retrieve his body in case the other fired



**“DESPITE THE DANGER,
PEOPLE ATTEMPTED TO
ESCAPE FOR THE PROMISE
OF FREEDOM IN THE
WEST. SOME SUCCEEDED,
MANY DID NOT”**



SPECIAL FORCES BERLIN

PART II

COLD WAR VIGIL & AN EVER-CHANGING MISSION

With the rise of the Wall, Detachment A faced an all new kind of challenge

WORDS JAMES STEJSKAL

It was clear that Special Forces Berlin's mission had become more difficult. West Berlin had been completely encircled by a barrier in depth – the Wall. The Stasi, East Germany's Ministry for State Security, had refined its methods to ensure the populace remained loyal to the régime and, with the assistance of the KGB, internal security was nearly perfect.

Despite the danger, people attempted to escape for the promise of freedom in the West. While some succeeded, many did not.

Rolf Kreuzer joined the US Army in the early 1950s. Born in Pforzheim, Germany, before the war, he knew who his enemy was – the Soviets had killed his father on the Eastern Front. In 1946, he emigrated to the United States and came back to Berlin as a Special Forces (SF) sergeant a decade later.

On 17 August 1962, Rolf was near the Wall when he heard shots. He moved closer and climbed up to an observation point looking into the East. Peering over the Wall he saw a man lying at its base. Peter Fechter, an 18-year-old student, had brazenly tried to escape the Communist zone in broad daylight, but the Grepos (border police) shot him as soon

as he entered the aptly-named 'death strip'. American Military Police (MPs) and West Berlin Police officers approached the scene but no one moved to help Fechter. Both sides thought the other would fire on them. Fechter slowly bled to death. Kreuzer's resolve to fight the Communists further hardened that day.

Counterinsurgency warfare

Back at Fort Bragg, the US Army's home for Special Forces, changes were taking place. The Soviet Union had committed itself to supporting revolutions in the Third World to 'divert the attention and forces of the United States'. Counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare was the new watchword and in the early 1960s, more and more Special Forces troops were sent to a far-away place called South Vietnam.

Acting as advisers, these men increasingly went into combat to assist that nation's military struggle against the Viet Cong guerrillas. President John F Kennedy promoted Special Forces (the Green Berets) as the panacea to communist insurgencies worldwide. Emphasis on SF's primary mission, unconventional warfare (UW), was de-emphasised and COIN came to the fore, except in Europe.

The 10th SF Group at Bad Tölz readied themselves for UW missions far to the East, while SF Berlin, now secretly designated the 39th SF Detachment, stood by to do the same in East Germany.

Since major field exercises were not possible in the confines of Berlin, the unit sent its A-Teams to West Germany to practice. There were two scenarios: first, infiltrate a team by parachute to work with a 'guerrilla force' – usually German Fallschirmjäger troops who were taught to conduct ambushes and raids – and then lead on missions against the OPFOR (opposing force – the simulated enemy).

The second of these missions was the more challenging: a trooper was inserted to act as a singleton member of an 'underground'. He needed to have a good reason to be in the area, acquire safe houses and transportation, and set up intelligence networks to support a Special Forces team's operations, all the while making sure his activities did not generate questions from curious Germans or the Polizei. Being arrested on an exercise was a sure method for being 'asked' to leave the unit.

Although their job was more discreet than the team's, the singleton troopers often had opportunities to throw a wrench into the OPFOR's operations. On one occasion, two troopers operating in neighbouring areas joined to infiltrate an 'enemy' command post under the cover of night. They quietly placed small

“BEING ARRESTED ON AN EXERCISE WAS A SURE METHOD FOR BEING ‘ASKED’ TO LEAVE THE UNIT”



Above: The author at the Berlin Wall, 1989

An SFB Assault Team moves into position during a counterterrorism exercise, 1986



Teams made terrain models of their selected crossing sites to war game situations



SF Berlin soldiers armed with MPK submachine guns practice entry tactics

booby traps on vehicles and a radio van. They stopped short of endangering an aircrew, but left a note on a helicopter instrument panel telling the pilot to check his rotors carefully. That delayed his morning flight considerably, especially after several smoke grenades went off under the unit's trucks.

On one practice mission, a trooper had to dump four OPFOR prisoners who had been captured by the SF team he supported. He was driving a van late at night and the men were tied up and blindfolded in the back. He couldn't just leave them in the street, so instead, he took them to the town of Ulm's red-light district and left the four in the care of some nice ladies at a 'house of ill-repute'. Some interesting tales probably came out their experiences.

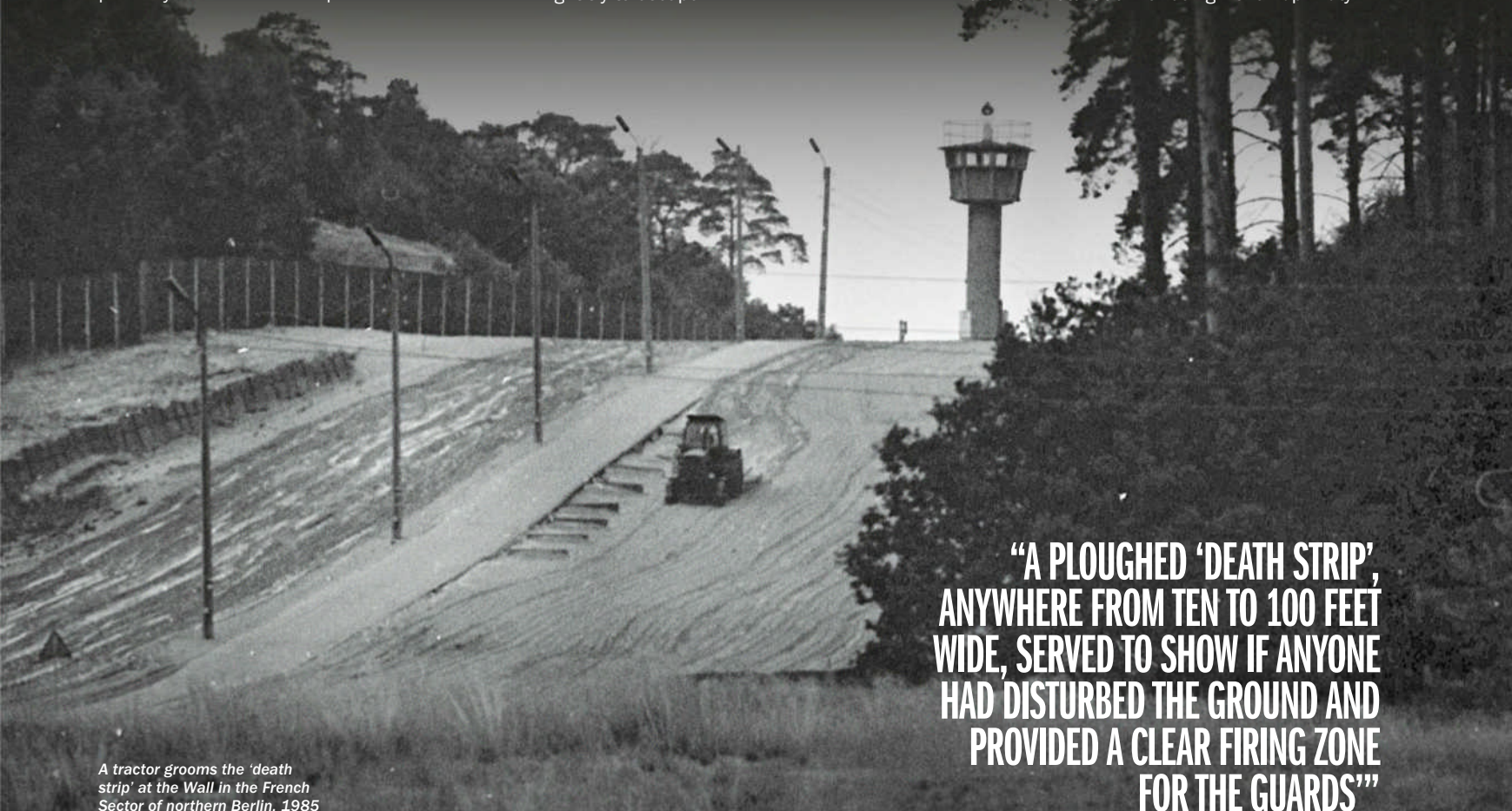
Back in the city

But the possibility of a hot war kept intruding. Every time someone in Moscow or Washington sneezed, the soldiers at the point of the spear went straight onto alert status. A two-hour standby was normal for Det A, but when tensions spiked, the men of the unit often spent their time very close to their headquarters, waiting for orders.

As the waiting game continued, team members would visit the areas near where they would have to cross the frontier into East Germany. Here they would survey the Grepos, or border guards, and their routines. The Grepos kept dogs in kennels near the towers as early warning and to chase down anyone who might try to escape.

The frontier was made up of two barriers. The first was a fence that kept East Germans out of the border area and the second was a 12-foot wall that was the actual border between East and West. A ploughed 'death strip', anywhere from ten to 100 feet wide, served to show if anyone had disturbed the ground and provided a clear firing zone for the guards.

A good way to test the system was with a slingshot – a well-placed rock did wonders to antagonise the dogs and often caused the guards to roll out of their towers to find out what was going on. If they called in an alert, reinforcements arrived and the observers could measure reaction times. It was important not to be seen, however, as a nervous guard might fire a shot in retaliation for being woken up. Duty



A tractor grooms the 'death strip' at the Wall in the French Sector of northern Berlin, 1985

“A PLOUGHED ‘DEATH STRIP’, ANYWHERE FROM TEN TO 100 FEET WIDE, SERVED TO SHOW IF ANYONE HAD DISTURBED THE GROUND AND PROVIDED A CLEAR FIRING ZONE FOR THE GUARDS”

EQUIPPING FOR SECRET WARFARE

SF BERLIN WAS EQUIPPED WITH GERMAN AS WELL AS SOME AMERICAN GEAR, ALTHOUGH MUCH OF THAT CAME FROM THE CIA. IT WAS STERILE - UNTRACEABLE - AND SUITED TO URBAN UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE OPERATIONS. MOST MEN CARRIED THEIR PERSONAL PISTOLS IN THE CITY, OFTEN A CZ75 OR PPK

RS-6 RADIO

Used in the early days of SF Berlin, the RS-6 was a compact, high-frequency 'agent radio' set that could be hidden and transported relatively easily. Developed by the CIA and pushing ten watts of power, an operator could send Morse code messages over long distances of 3,000 kilometres or more. The set consisted of four pieces: a receiver, transmitter, power source and power filter.



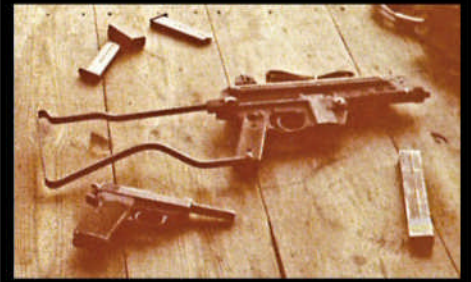
STINGER

Developed by the Military Armaments Corporation (MAC) to a CIA request in the 1960s, the .22 calibre Stinger was a lethal weapon designed for covert operations. With only one shot immediately and inaccurate beyond about one foot, the pistol was designed for close-range killing. It was often hidden in toothpaste tubes or similar containers for concealed transport.

“THE PISTOL WAS DESIGNED FOR CLOSE-RANGE KILLING. IT WAS OFTEN HIDDEN IN TOOTHPASTE TUBES OR SIMILAR CONTAINERS FOR CONCEALED TRANSPORT”

WALTHER MPK

The German Walther MPK 9x19mm Parabellum submachine gun was issued to each SF Berlin trooper in 1963, replacing the American M3 'Greasegun'. Extremely reliable and accurate, the MPK was well suited for close-quarter battle situations and could be fitted with a noise suppressor. SF Berlin was the only American unit to use the MPK, and the H&K MP5 replaced it in 1983.



WELROD

The Welrod 9x19mm aka Mark I Hand Firing Device was developed by the British SOE and adopted by the American OSS. Later adopted by the CIA it was also issued to SF Berlin where it would be used for close-in killing.



A Special Forces Berlin member practices shooting his Mark I Hand Firing Device. The gun was regularly used for close-in killing

LIFE AS A 'CLANDESTINE WARRIOR'

**IN PEACETIME, POOR DISCIPLINE
WEEDED OUT THE UNSUITABLE... IN WAR,
IT WOULD KILL YOU**

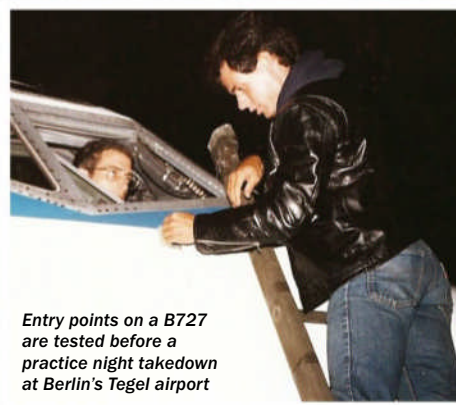
Imagine you are walking down a Berlin street in winter, pummelled by a icy wind off the frozen steppes of Russia. It's late and you've been walking for hours, constantly checking to ensure you are 'clean'. You have seen nothing unusual and are minutes from passing a package of contraband to someone who needs it now. Stress is high and your heart is racing. A car stops behind you. Two men get out and start to walk in the your direction. The car rolls past and turns the corner - the same direction you were going. You see more men further to your front. At the corner, you see the car - stopped. What now?

Special Forces Berlin sought men with maturity, foreign language ability, tactical and technical proficiency, excellent physical conditioning and ingenuity. Every man was willing to work behind enemy lines, often in civilian clothing, fully aware that capture could mean death.

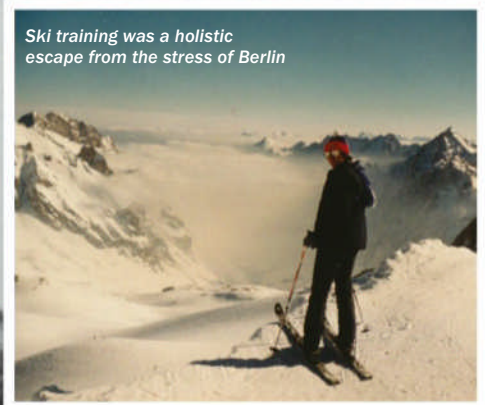
Careful screening ensured each man had the conspiratorial behaviour and demeanour to stay cool under pressure. Determination, adaptability and innovation were important. SF Berlin soldiers needed to succeed as team members, but also have the physical and mental stamina to work for long periods alone in a difficult, dangerous environment.

While there is instant gratification associated with missions like an aeroplane takedown or raid, a prisoner snatch or long-range sniper shot - they all require exacting precision and the results are easily observed. That gratification is less evident practicing the tradecraft to effectively operate clandestinely - that requires special motivation.

'Hours and hours of boredom, punctuated with moments of extreme terror' is apt for these moments when the smallest mistake could lead to capture. Only training, instincts, clear thinking, and sometimes luck, will enable you to survive. There is no single answer to the above situation. Do the best you can.



Entry points on a B727 are tested before a practice night takedown at Berlin's Tegel airport

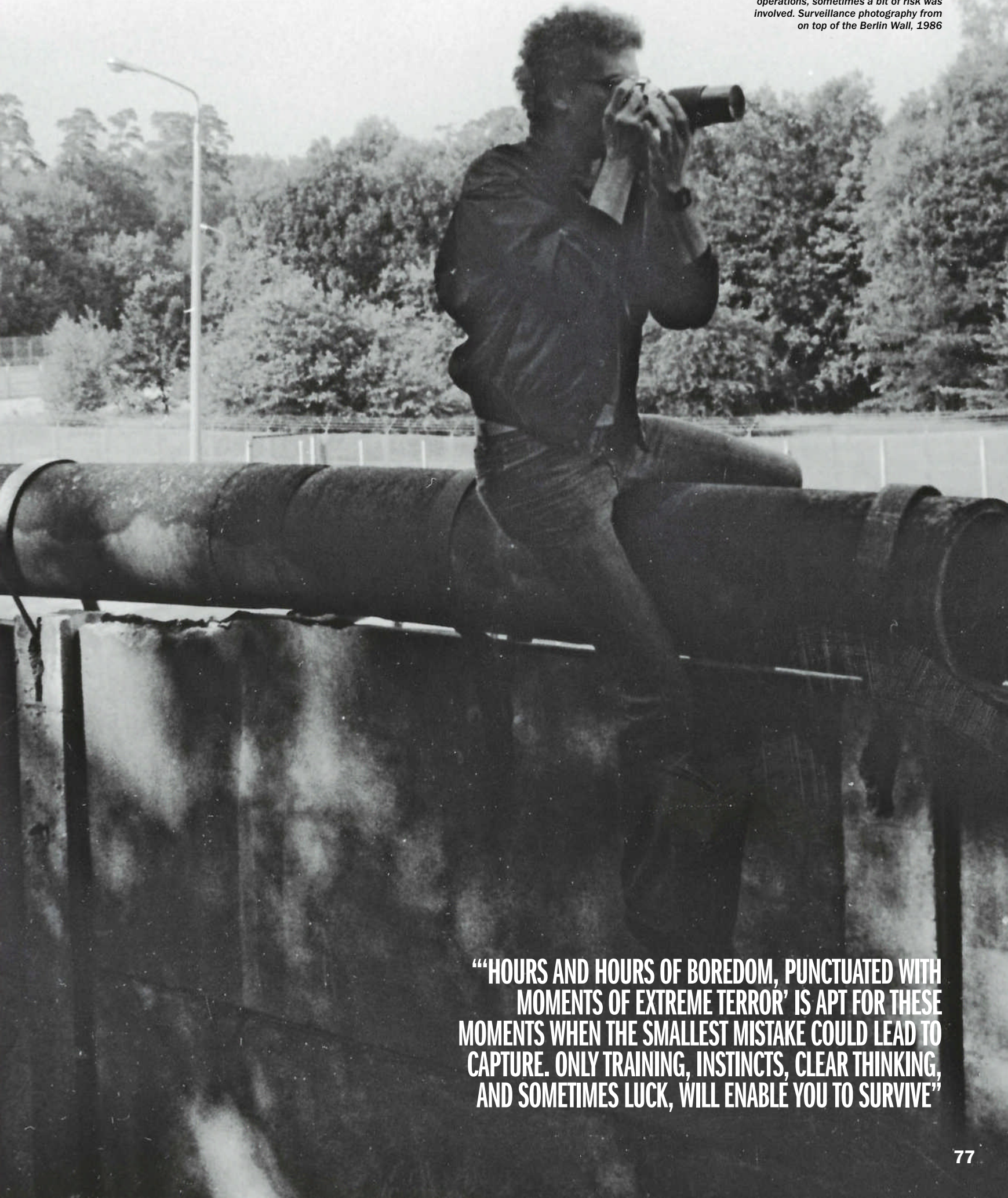


Ski training was a holistic escape from the stress of Berlin



Left: Surveillance follows the 'dark man' in Berlin's Underground, hopefully without being compromised

Although discretion marked most operations, sometimes a bit of risk was involved. Surveillance photography from on top of the Berlin Wall, 1986



“HOURS AND HOURS OF BOREDOM, PUNCTUATED WITH MOMENTS OF EXTREME TERROR’ IS APT FOR THESE MOMENTS WHEN THE SMALLEST MISTAKE COULD LEAD TO CAPTURE. ONLY TRAINING, INSTINCTS, CLEAR THINKING, AND SOMETIMES LUCK, WILL ENABLE YOU TO SURVIVE”

West Germans look over the Berlin Wall into the eastern sector of the city

“THE WALL HAD ONE FLAW. IT WAS DESIGNED TO KEEP EAST GERMANS FROM ESCAPING THEIR COUNTRY, NOT TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT. ALTHOUGH NOT MANY PEOPLE WANTED TO GET INTO EAST GERMANY, IT LEFT AN AVENUE OPEN FOR THE UNIT AND MANY CROSSING LOCATIONS WERE IDENTIFIED FOR OPERATIONAL USE”

“FINDING A GOOD HIDING PLACE TO OBSERVE THE FIELD, THE FOG SLOWLY LIFTED AND THEIR EYES AND CAMERAS WERE GREETED WITH A NEWLY ARRIVED SOVIET AIR ASSAULT REGIMENT AND EQUALLY NEW HIND-D HELICOPTERS. IT WAS AN INTELLIGENCE COUP”

in Berlin was often more like two rival gangs facing off than two enemy armies. This was a very personal frontline.

But the Wall had one flaw. It was designed to keep East Germans from escaping their country, not for keeping people out. Although not many people wanted to get into East Germany, it left an avenue open for the unit and many crossing locations were identified for operational use. There were also waterways available to the unit's combat swimmers, who mastered the use of closed-circuit underwater rebreathers for just such an eventuality.

The Seventies

As numerous conflicts and brush wars were fought around the globe, NATO and the Warsaw Pact faced each other warily in Europe. The four occupying powers – the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union – had a mechanism for keeping tabs on each other's activities called Military Liaison Missions (MLM). Using marked cars, Soviet officers patrolled the Allied Zones while the Allies did the same in East Germany. The rules were simple: certain areas were completely off limits and it was bad form to get caught there. In West Germany, the punishment for getting caught was benign. The Russians, if caught, would be prevented from continuing their drive and sent back to their base with a complaint.

The Soviets played by different rules. They would chase and box-in cars, but then often get physical, subjecting the Allied teams to what was known as a 'clobber'. The rather

expensively modified Allied MLM cars would often be intentionally wrecked by a military truck or armoured vehicle to keep them from doing their job.

SF Berlin viewed the US MLM as an excellent opportunity not only to get familiar with the Soviet and East German armies, but also as a way to get 'eyes on' the unit's targets and the countryside. Detachment troopers like 'Ron' were assigned to the mission to exploit this capability. In 1978, after learning how to manoeuvre a Mercedes sedan cross-country like a 4x4 Jeep, Ron began to drive on these 'tours'. On one eventful journey, he and his partner, a US MLM intelligence officer, were driving back to the mission's home base in Potsdam when they happened onto a halted Soviet convoy.

Passing the convoy, they came abreast of the lead vehicle when a Soviet armoured personnel carrier shot out of the forest and rammed their vehicle, sending it flipping off the road where it landed on its roof. Ron was dazed, but worse, his partner was injured. The Russians dragged both of them from the car, through the broken windows, and looted it. It was hours before Ron got his companion to the hospital and then he still had to get home and file a report. The Soviets said the car went out of control because of "high speed and erratic driving."

Ron got his revenge on another 'tour'. While driving through a Soviet training area one morning, Ron and his comrade noticed a number of strange objects in the early morning fog. Finding a good hiding place to observe the

field, the fog slowly lifted and their eyes and cameras were greeted with a newly arrived Soviet air assault regiment and equally new Hind-D helicopters. It was an intelligence coup.

A new enemy rises

In the late 1960s, Berlin was a haven for students who did not want to serve in the German Army. Many who opposed the 'bourgeois capitalist state' and the war in Vietnam came there. Others, determined to bring down the West German government and rid Europe of American forces, sought out a different course, and the city became a hotbed of radicalism.

In 1972, the Palestinian Black September terrorist incident at the Munich Olympics showed that terrorism had become a new threat to European stability. In response, the German government created GSG-9, a paramilitary counterterrorism (CT) unit, while the British and Israelis trained existing army units to handle the task. The United States, having no such capability, worked to catch up.

In 1974, the US European Command (USEUCOM) tasked Special Forces Berlin to provide an anti-hijacking sniper capability for Berlin. Having already trained extensively in precision long-range marksmanship to knock out 'material' targets, such as Soviet mobile rockets, the transition was not difficult. In 1975, Det A was given the counterterrorism mission for USEUCOM and by mid-1976, it was operating as the US Army's first CT force.

Counterterrorism training required innovation. Conducting 'very surgical operations' to free hostages intermingled with armed terrorists required the unit to perfect its skills in all possible scenarios: buildings, aircraft, buses, trains – with the possible exception of boats – day and night. Individual and multi-team operations were conducted until the actions required became ingrained in muscle memory. Skills were honed using FBI quick-



CT scenario training at the Shooting House in Berlin c. 1988



Sometimes the MLM tours got a bit too close. Pictured is an East German Army BTR-152 armoured vehicle

kill and British SAS close-quarter battle (CQB) techniques at ranges from seven to 50 meters, while the snipers and marksmen practiced at up to 500 meters by day and 300 meters with night sights. CT operators had to demonstrate exacting familiarity, focus, precision and deliberate speed with their weapons.

In the second year of Det A's CT operations, the supervisor of the Berlin ammunition depot remarked that the unit has expended more ammunition than the entire Berlin Brigade. The unit's Walther P38 pistols, originally chosen because both West and East Germany used them, proved unequal to the heavy use and were quickly replaced with the more-robust 9mm Walther P5. The Walther MPK 9mm submachine gun proved itself quite useful (although it too would be replaced by the ubiquitous Heckler Koch MP5 in 1983).

In early 1978, the assault team's lethality was demonstrated to visiting USEUCOM VIPs, including the deputy commander, a four-star admiral. The scenario was a multi-room clearing exercise, which the visitors could view from a semi-safe observation point. Mannequins were placed in the rooms, some armed, some not, to serve as 'shoot no-shoot' targets.

With the big brass watching, the team blew the door open and engaged the 'terrorist' dummies in three consecutive rooms with live ammunition. To highlight the shooting, the mannequin heads had been filled with red paint, which exploded all over the room when

"THE DEMO WAS OVER IN A MANNER OF SECONDS AND, SHAKEN BY WHAT HE HAD JUST WITNESSED, THE ADMIRAL TURNED TO THE DETACHMENT COMMANDER, COLONEL STAN OLCHOVIK, SAYING: 'THAT LOOKS VERY DANGEROUS.' COLONEL 'O' WRYLY RESPONDED: 'IT IS, BUT ONLY FOR THE TERRORISTS'"

hit. The demo, with the bang and smoke of the explosive entry and shooting, along with resulting 'blood' spattered walls, scared the admiral when he realised it was all live fire. The demo was over in a manner of seconds and, shaken by what he had witnessed, the admiral turned to the Detachment commander, Colonel Stan Olchovik, saying: "That looks very dangerous." Colonel 'O' wryly responded: "It is, but only for the terrorists."

1979

The unit now had to balance two missions – one for wartime and one for peacetime. Half the unit would be on stand-by for the CT mission, while the other half would continue preparations for war. After several months, the duty would rotate. Schools and training outside the city, including the annual holistic downhill ski training, would go to the teams off CT status. It was necessary to bust out of the closed city periodically to prevent cabin fever.

In November, the routine changed drastically when militant Iranian 'students' seized the US Embassy compound in Teheran and took 66 Americans hostage. As Iran was within USEUCOM's area of responsibility, SF Berlin was alerted to provide its expertise, which initially was to infiltrate Tehran to bring back intelligence the CIA could not provide. SF Berlin's soldiers were ideally trained for the mission as they could enter the country under the cover of a nationality other than American. Two men were chosen for the mission and began to prepare.

When planners realised that not all of the Americans were being held at the Embassy compound – three were held at the Iranian Foreign Ministry – it became clear a rescue attempt would not only be risky, but would require a lot of assets. Colonel Charlie Beckwith, commander of the new national force, 1st SFOD-Delta, said he could only handle the embassy. Colonel 'O' spoke up and said his men could handle the other site. SF

Assault team at the range. Armed with H&K MP5 with early laser sights and a Remington 870P 12 gauge shotgun. From Right to Left: Rick, Tom, Ski and Joe



Hard skills like helicopter ladder ex-filtration were practiced at day and night



Berlin now had two missions: intelligence and hostage rescue.

Ultimately the mission ended in failure when US Navy helicopters proved inadequate. The rescue force was pulled out of Iran early, leaving behind the intelligence team in Tehran. Using their skill and experience as clandestine operators, however, they were able to get out of the country in a story worthy of John le Carré.

The disappointment was palpable in Berlin in the aftermath, but the mission's high visibility had consequences. Someone leaked details of a Special Forces unit in Berlin and compromised the team's existence. The USEUCOM commander demanded a solution be found, and it was. Slowly, Detachment A was pulled out of Berlin to be surreptitiously replaced by another SF unit that had a better cover: Physical Security Support Element – Berlin (PSSE-B).

Sleight of hand and a disappearing act

In 1984, the transition was completed – PSSE-B took the reins and assumed both the UW and CT missions. PSSE-B's classified designation was the 410th SF Detachment, but to outsiders it was a specialist Military Police unit. It was a 'Red Team' that provided physical security assistance and reviews, as well as penetration tests and vulnerability assessments. With three missions, one of them a 'cover', the unit was exceptionally busy with training, exercises and

travelling across Europe and Africa to conduct surveys of embassies, weapons facilities and command posts. The 110 men of the unit were moving fast as the political and military climate kept evolving.

Alerts, real and practiced, happened with an unpredictable regularity. Echoes of the 1983-84 nuclear war scare and Soviet unease with an increasingly restive populace in its Warsaw Pact satellites, reminded the men of the unit how thin was the razor-blade of peace.

Terrorism provided a diversion. The unit was alerted for several terrorist incidents, the TWA 847 airliner hijacking and the Achille Lauro cruise ship hijacking. The first deployment was halted by the difficulty of the target, the US government was not ready to commit forces into Beirut. The second was stopped by a diplomatic confrontation between the US and Italy.

Then the 1986 La Belle disco bombing in Berlin hit close to home – it was a favourite haunt of GIs. The terrorist bomb injured many and killed two, a soldier and a civilian. The unit was alerted for action while police investigators and intelligence assets sought the identity of those who carried out the attack.

The answer came days later when an intercept pointed to Libya and its leader Muammar Gaddafi, who wanted revenge for confrontations with the US Navy in the Gulf of Sidra. Libyan diplomats in East Berlin supported the attack with the help of the Stasi. A Libyan terrorist was given explosives and

a target, the discotheque. In the aftermath, SF Berlin planned for retaliation. One option was snatching the Libyan mastermind from East Berlin, but the surgical mission, although feasible, was halted by what would become the United States's signature action against terrorists – in this case, Operation El Dorado Canyon, the aerial bombing of Tripoli.

Until 9/11, US special operations forces would not be deployed against terrorists.

Until the fall

The Warsaw Pact had become unstable, but no one on either side of the 'Iron Curtain' knew what would happen. SF Berlin monitored events but kept at its many missions. In addition, co-operation with intelligence agencies kept some troopers busy on surveillance missions inside Berlin and others worked with the US MLM. Certification exercises happened twice a year. An exercise in 1989 almost ended in disaster when an Air Force MH-53 'Pave Low' helicopter nearly ditched in the English Channel with half the force on board. It was always an interesting time

Then one night a call came into the unit, "The Wall is open." It was November 9, 1989.

With that, the paradigm that kept SF in Berlin changed. The Iron Curtain fell and the 'peace dividend' was seized upon. The US military was drastically reduced, Special Forces Berlin was disbanded and a valuable capability eliminated. We know now that decision was far too optimistic.

Images: Getty, R. Hopkins, R. Schreiber, Bob Way

East Germans drive their vehicles through Checkpoint Charlie as they take advantage of relaxed travel restrictions to visit West Germany



FURTHER READING

📖 HUMAN FACTORS CONSIDERATIONS OF UNDERGROUNDS IN INSURGENCIES BY ANDREW MOLNER, JERRY TINKER AND JON LENOIR

📖 SECRET INTELLIGENCE FIELD MANUAL [TOP SECRET – DECLASSIFIED 2013] BY THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

*Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa
Ngarimu's bravery
highlighted the courage
of the 28th (Maori)
Battalion during WWII*

**"THE KING NOT ONLY HONOURS NGARIMU HIMSELF,
BUT THROUGH HIM, HIS BATTALION AND HIS
COUNTRY. NO WORDS OF MINE CAN ADEQUATELY
EXPRESS MY ADMIRATION FOR HIS COURAGE"**

– Sir Cyril Newall, Governor General of New Zealand



Heroes of the Victoria Cross

MOANA-NUI-A-KIWA NGARIMU

This brave New Zealander became the first Maori to be awarded the VC during the North African campaign in 1943

WORDS TOM GARNER

Although New Zealand is a small, isolated country in the south-western Pacific Ocean it played a disproportionately large part during WWII. In 1940, the country's population was only around 1,600,000, but nonetheless around 140,000 New Zealanders served in the Allied armed forces. Among them were 16,000 Maoris of whom 20 percent served in the 28th (Maori) Battalion. Consisting of between 700-900 men, the battalion established a formidable reputation as one of New Zealand's finest fighting forces and perhaps their bravest soldier was Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu, the first Maori to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

Ngarimu was born on 7 April 1919 at Whareponga on the East Coast region of North Island and had both Ngati Porou and Te Whanau-a-Apanui iwi (tribal) descent. During his teenage years, he was known to be an outstanding rugby player and by 1939 he was training to be a sheep farmer and engaged to be married. However, when war broke out it was not entirely certain that he would be allowed to volunteer and fight.

Upon the declaration of war, Maori leaders offered men for both home defence and overseas service before the New Zealand parliament. Although there was some questioning over whether Maoris would or should assist the British, a prominent Maori MP Sir Apirana Ngata declared, "We are participants in a great Commonwealth, to the defence of which we cannot hesitate to contribute our blood and our lives. We are of one house, and if our Pakeha (white New Zealander) brothers fall, we fall with them. How can we ever hold up our heads, when the struggle is over, to the question, 'Where were you when New Zealand was at war?'"

The 28th (Maori) Battalion

The government agreed with Ngata and the 28th (Maori) battalion was formed in October 1939. Enlistment in the battalion was voluntary for Maoris while non-Maoris were subject to conscription by May 1940. Tens of thousands of Maoris registered for service in the New Zealand armed forces and mostly served in areas such as home defence, artillery, engineering and service corps. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of recruits served in the 28th Battalion and Ngarimu volunteered at Ruatoria on 11 May 1940.

The 28th Battalion was part of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) during the war. The division consisted of 15,000-20,000 men that were divided into three infantry brigades (4th, 5th and 6th). Because the 28th was a specially formed battalion it was attached to each of the division's three brigades at different times. The battalion itself was divided into five companies, which included four rifle companies of 125 men.

Each company was organised on tribal lines and selected officers and NCOs trained at Trentham near Wellington from November 1939. The battalion then assembled as a whole at Palmerston North on 26 January 1940 before finally sailing from Wellington with the 2NZEF in early May aboard the luxury liner RMS Aquitania.

Despite being willingly accepted by the New Zealand government, the 28th Battalion were subject to the racial segregation policies of South Africa when the Aquitania stopped over in Cape Town. While the white New Zealanders were given shore leave, the Maoris were kept on the ship for four days. Frustration mounted and the battalion was eventually given less than an hour to see the city. Despite being warned to be on their best behaviour, the troops were warmly received by the local population.

Arriving in Scotland on 16 June 1940, the battalion spent the Battle of Britain in southern England training and preparing defences. It was during this period that Ngarimu was selected for intelligence duties.

After serving for six months in England, the battalion sailed for Egypt and upon arrival in March 1941 was reinforced by 300 Maori from New Zealand.

Greece and North Africa

From late March 1941, Ngarimu and the 28th were sent to defend northern Greece against a German invasion but a blitzkrieg offensive in April completely outflanked Commonwealth and Greek forces. Ngarimu would have first seen action at Olympus Pass on 15 April and by the time the battalion was evacuated to Crete, dozens of men had been killed or taken prisoner.

The subsequent battle for Crete saw the battalion come into its own. Although the Germans eventually took the island, the Maoris

"WE ARE PARTICIPANTS IN A GREAT COMMONWEALTH, TO THE DEFENCE OF WHICH WE CANNOT HESITATE TO CONTRIBUTE OUR BLOOD AND OUR LIVES. WE ARE OF ONE HOUSE"

- Maori MP, Sir Apirana Ngata

Members of the 28th (Maori) Battalion perform a haka (ceremonial war dance) for the king of Greece in Egypt, 24 June 1941. Like Ngarimu, these men were all survivors of the Battle of Greece

“THE OFFICERS SUGGESTED THAT THEIR MEN SHOULD HAVE SOME REST, HOWEVER, NGARIMU AND HIS COMRADES WERE ABOUT TO EARN A PLACE IN THE HISTORY BOOKS”



distinguished themselves on a dirt road known as '42nd Street'. When the Germans advanced, the battalion led the 5th Brigade in a ferocious bayonet charge and inflicted significant casualties. The Maoris claimed to have killed more than 80 Germans for the loss of only four men. Although it cannot be known for certain, it is possible that Ngarimu remembered this offensive action for future operations.

Once they were evacuated to Egypt, Ngarimu took part in the North African campaign with the battalion. By April 1942 he had been commissioned as a second lieutenant and became the platoon commander of C Company. This was entirely appropriate because C Company comprised of Maoris from the tribes of the East Coast region such as the Ngati Porou and Rongowhakaata. Lieutenant Ngarimu and the battalion soon became heavily involved in the fighting of the Western Desert from the summer of 1942.

On 26 June 1942, the 21st Panzer Division surrounded the 2NZEF but they managed to break out with the Maoris smashing through German lines with a surprise bayonet attack at night. The battalion then took part in the decisive Allied victory at the Second Battle of El Alamein and the Maoris participated in the subsequent pursuit of retreating Axis forces.

On 23 January the battalion became the second New Zealand outfit to enter Tripoli. By now the Maoris, including Ngarimu, were highly experienced and effective soldiers. This success came at a price, however, when in February 1943 officers from C Company, including Ngarimu, wrote to Sir Apirana Ngata to describe the battalion's casualties. Following El Alamein and Tripoli, some men had been wounded two or three times with the fittest among them being used to reinforce the front lines. The officers suggested that their men should have some rest, however, Ngarimu

and his comrades were about to earn a place in the history books.

The Tebaga Gap

After the fall of Tripoli the Eighth Army, of which the 28th Battalion was a part, looked to push into Tunisia, but its way was blocked by the Mareth Line: a defensive position that was 35 kilometres long and extended from the Mediterranean coast to inland mountains.

On 20 March 1943 the Eighth Army attacked the line with XXX Corps against the Italian-German 1st Army. At the same time Free French and New Zealand troops attacked the German right flank and when XXX Corps was thrown back the flanking attack was reinforced. It was at this point that 28th Battalion found itself in a low mountain pass in rocky country known as the Tebaga Gap. The battalion's objective was a hill known as Point 209, which was heavily defended by Wehrmacht Panzer infantrymen of the 164th Infantry Division. Ngati Porou soldiers among the Maoris called Point 209 'Hukurangi' after their home mountain and C Company was ordered to attack the position on 26 March.

Point 209 was defended with intense mortar and machine gun fire but Ngarimu was one of the platoon leaders in charge of attacking the hill. His task was to attack and capture a feature forward of Point 209 and according to Lieutenant Colonel Charles Bennett, the commander of the battalion, "displaying courage and leadership of the highest order, [Ngarimu] was himself first on the hill crest, personally annihilating at least two enemy machine gun posts."

The hill was taken but "under cover of a most intense mortar barrage the enemy counterattacked" many times through the night of 26-27 March. Ngarimu was wounded twice in the shoulder and leg but refused to leave his men and led the defence. He also, "ordered his

men to stand up and engage the enemy man for man." Ngarimu threw back the attackers using his machine gun and even threw stones in hand-to-hand combat when weapons and grenades had run out. The position held and thanks to Ngarimu's "inspired leadership" the Maoris engaged the Germans "with such good effect that the attackers were literally mown down."

During one of these counterattacks a part of the line was breached but Ngarimu immediately took control, "yelling out orders and encouragement, he rallied his men and led them in a fierce onslaught back into their old positions." By the morning of 27 March, the end was near and Ngarimu was still in possession of Point 209 but with only two unwounded men fighting with him.

Reinforcements were sent up but the Germans counterattacked once again and this time Ngarimu's luck ran out as Bennett reported, "It was during this attack that 2nd Lieutenant Ngarimu was killed. He was killed on his feet defiantly facing the enemy with his Tommy gun at his hip. As he fell he came to rest almost on top of those of the enemy who had fallen, the number of whom testified to his outstanding courage and fortitude."

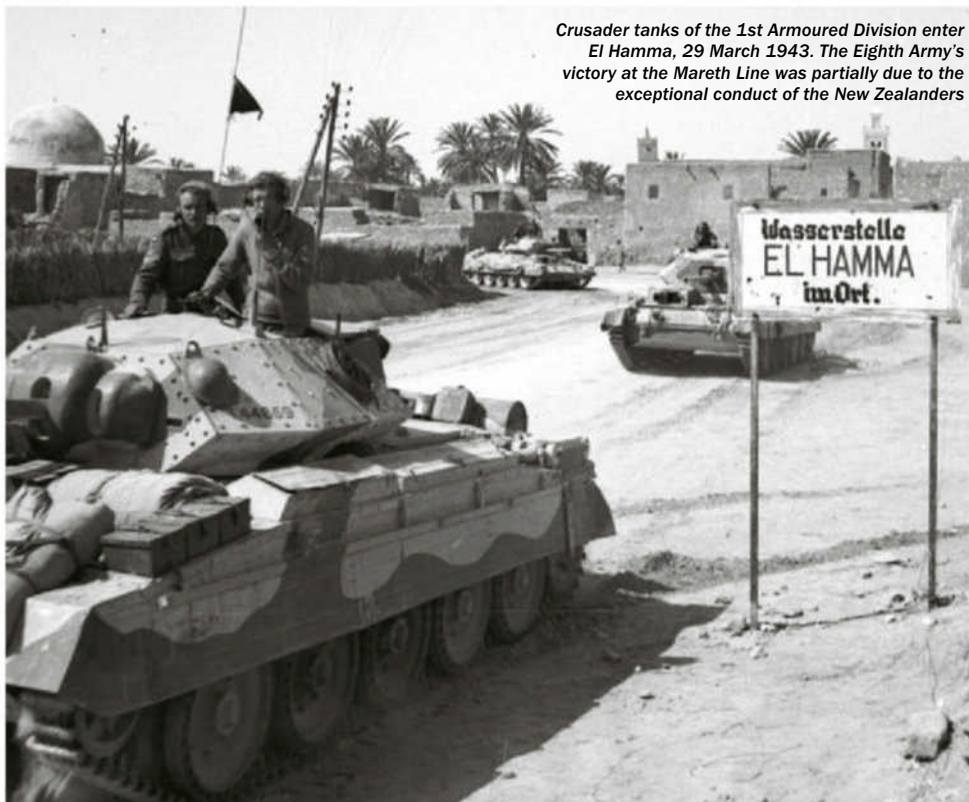
A continuing legacy

Thanks to Ngarimu's courageous stand, the remaining Germans surrendered on Point 209 later that day. Three months later, Ngarimu was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the sixth to be awarded to a New Zealander during WWII and more significantly the first to a Maori soldier. On 6 October 1943 the Governor General of New Zealand Sir Cyril Newall addressed 7,000 people at Whakarua Park, Ruatoria who had gathered for Ngarimu's investiture ceremony. The attendees included his family, the prime minister of New Zealand and 1,300 schoolchildren from across the country.

The news of Ngarimu's bravery and subsequent VC was also broadcast worldwide and Newall's address paid tribute to the courage of the Maoris, "It is fitting that we should, at this moment, consider the debt that we all owe to the Maori Battalion. By their deeds of valour they have won for themselves a place in the history of war. For centuries to come, they will be remembered with gratitude and praise by free men and women throughout the world. Maori tradition is full of stories of the courage of your forefathers. Your own sons and brothers have shown that they have inherited that courage to the full."

As for the brave lieutenant, "in making this award, the King not only honours Ngarimu himself, but through him, his Battalion and his country. No words of mine can adequately express my admiration for his courage."

Ngarimu's sacrifice was never forgotten and his legacy is still remembered positively today. Shortly after his death, a gathering of Maoris from the East Coast region discussed how to best commemorate Ngarimu's bravery and other members of the 28th Battalion who had been killed in the war. They decided to establish the "Ngarimu VC and 28th (Maori) Battalion Memorial Scholarships" to fund and promote Maori education and it is an initiative that is still a prized part of the New Zealand government's education department today.



Crusader tanks of the 1st Armoured Division enter El Hamma, 29 March 1943. The Eighth Army's victory at the Mareth Line was partially due to the exceptional conduct of the New Zealanders

MIL MI-24 HIND

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

An icon of the Cold War, the Soviet-era Mil Mi-24 Hind attack helicopter has served in more than a dozen conflicts

Wherever the Soviet Union and its proxies sought to exert their influence through military means during the Cold War, the Mil Mi-24 attack helicopter provided the muscle to support the Red Army and its allies. Since its deployment in the early 1970s, the formidable aircraft, code-named 'Hind' in NATO parlance, continues to serve as the flying fist of tactical air forces in dozens of countries.

Soviet military observers watched with interest as the United States became embroiled in the Vietnam War during the 1960s, and one of their far-reaching conclusions related

to the use of American helicopter gunships and airmobile transportation of troops. Soviet designers sought to combine mobile firepower and troop transport capabilities into a single helicopter type.

Engineer and designer Mikhail Leontyevich Mil proposed a design for such a helicopter as early as 1966. Mil devoted the rest of his life to developing the Mi-24, besting a competing model from the Kamov Design Bureau based on its Ka-25 antisubmarine warfare helicopter.

In the spring of 1968, the Soviet military issued a directive for the development of a robust, twin-engine helicopter capable of serving as an aerial gun platform or attack

aircraft while also carrying up to eight combat-equipped Red Army soldiers. Secretive design work, designated as project Yellow 24, began that summer, and the first prototype flew in the autumn of 1969.

Modifications to improve flight stability and enhance the Mi-24's weapons capabilities resulted in a remarkably agile and menacing helicopter that earned nicknames such as the Flying Tank, Crocodile, and Drinking Glass. The Hind has been deployed extensively during the last half century, gaining particular notoriety during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Export versions, designated the Mi-25 Hind D and Mi-35 Hind E, continue to serve around the globe.

The distinctive tandem, bubble, bulletproof glass canopy of the Mil Mi-24 Hind makes the assault helicopter easily identifiable



“MODIFICATIONS TO THE FLIGHT STABILITY AND THE MI-24’S WEAPONS RESULTED IN A REMARKABLY AGILE AND MENACING HELICOPTER”

MIL MI-24 HIND SPECIFICATIONS

COMMISSIONED: 1972 **ORIGIN:** SOVIET UNION **CREW:** 2
LENGTH: 17.5 METERS **RANGE:** 950 KILOMETRES
ENGINE: 2 X 2,200 SHAFT HORSEPOWER ISOTOV TV-3-117 TURBINES
PRIMARY WEAPON: 4 X 12.7MM YAKB-12.7 BARREL MACHINE GUNS
SECONDARY WEAPON: 30MM GSH-30K TWIN BARREL CANNON; ANTI-TANK ROCKETS

Twin Isotov TV-3-117 gas turbine engines are top-mounted on the Mil Mi-24 Hind assault helicopter, adding to its high profile, and each contributing 2,200 shaft horsepower

“THE ISOTOV TV-3-117 GAS TURBINE ENGINE IS A COMMON POWERPLANT AMONG SOVIET- AND SUBSEQUENTLY RUSSIAN-BUILT UTILITY OR ATTACK HELICOPTERS, AND MORE THAN 25,000 HAVE BEEN MANUFACTURED TO DATE”

Left: Technicians work on an Isotov TV-3-117 gas turbine engine

ENGINE

Developed in the early 1970s, the Isotov TV-3-117 gas turbine engine is a common powerplant among Soviet- and subsequently Russian-built utility or attack helicopters, and more than 25,000 have been manufactured to date. The TV-3-117 delivers 2,200 shaft horsepower, and its twin configuration is top-mounted on the Mi-24 midway along the fuselage, contributing to the helicopter's distinctive silhouette. Developed co-operatively by the Mil and Klimov design bureaus, the engine has been produced in a number of variants, including the TV-3-117V, which entered production in 1980 for use in Mi-24s operating at high altitudes in the mountainous areas of Afghanistan.

Menacing 57mm rocket pods are affixed to hard points on the stubby wings. The rockets are among a vast array of Mi-24 armament options

“THE HIND D AND E VARIANTS FEATURE TURRET-MOUNTED FOUR-BARRELLED 12.7MM MACHINE GUNS”

Tactically, the Mil Mi-24 assault helicopter often operates in pairs. Here an Mi-24 discharges weaponry during a live-fire exercise

ARMAMENT

Capable of ground support, anti-tank, and even air-to-air combat, the Mi-24 Hind carries a variety of weapons packages. A pair of stubby wings on each side of the fuselage holds three hard points each, for affixing 9K114 Shturm or 9M17 Fleyta (AT-6 Spiral and AT-2 Swatter NATO designations) anti-tank guided missiles, 57mm rocket pods, or 250 to 500-kilogram bombs. The Hind D and E variants feature turret-mounted four-barrelled 12.7mm machine guns, while the Hind D and its export version, the Mi-25, feature a chin-mounted turret. The Hind E mounts a GSh-23V 23mm cannon. All Hind variants may also carry grenade launchers.

A four-barrelled 12.7mm machine gun, capable of a high rate of fire, juts from the chin of an Mi-24

“THE COCKPITS ARE STEPPED FOR BETTER VISIBILITY AND PROTECTION FROM GROUND FIRE”

The interior of the Mi-24 Hind cockpit displays instrumentation in standard positions



Right: The two occupants of the Mi-24, pilot and weapons operator, occupy tandem, stepped cockpits

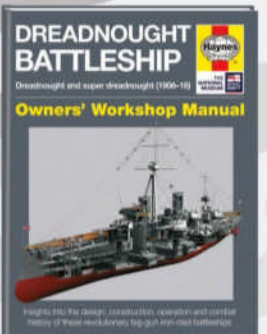
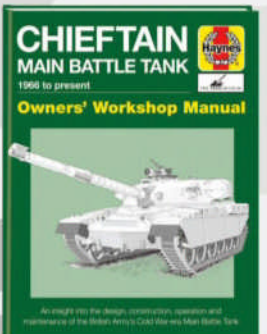
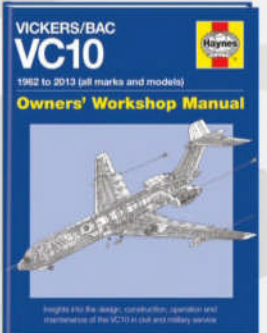
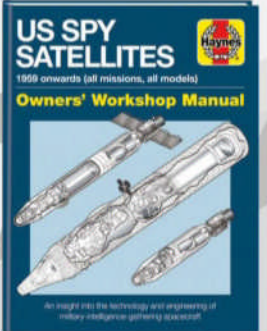


COCKPIT

The two-man crew of the Mi-24 Hind, pilot and weapons operator, occupy tandem seat positions in titanium armoured cockpits with bubble bulletproof glass windscreens. The cockpits are stepped for better visibility and protection from ground fire with the pilot occupying the rear position. Main instrumentation is positioned on a forward instrument panel with a moving map at upper right, while the stick is positioned for ease of movement and control of the attitude of the helicopter in flight. An armament panel at the lower centre controls all weapons systems and includes a master arm switch. The gear and hydraulics panel is to the left.



A WORLD OF
**MILITARY
INFORMATION**



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While achieving notoriety primarily in the ground attack role, a modified Mi-24 did in fact establish helicopter speed records in the 70s

DESIGN

Soviet aircraft designers sought to combine the qualities of the gunship and troop transport helicopter in the Mil Mi-24 Hind. The earliest models were configured with the ability to carry up to eight combat troops, but this role has since diminished as warfare has evolved.

The aircraft is a conventional pod and boom design with a five-blade main rotor, three-blade tail rotor and retractable tricycle landing gear. The stubby wings supply approximately one-quarter of the Mi-24's lift capability as well as weapons hard points, and the twin turbine engines are mounted high in the fuselage. Much of the design was based on the earlier Mil Mi-8 Hip helicopter.

SERVICE HISTORY

THE MI-24 HIND ATTACK HELICOPTER SERVICE LIFE EXTENDS NEARLY 50 YEARS, WITH SOVIET AND RUSSIAN FORCES, AND AS AN EXPORT SYSTEM

Two years after the death of its principal advocate, aircraft designer Mikhail Mil, the Mi-24 attack helicopter entered service with the Soviet military in 1972. More than 2,300 are believed to have been built. In addition to those serving today with Russian forces, the Mi-24 remains a staple of air support capabilities in at least 30 other countries.

The robust Mi-24 demonstrated surprising speed in the mid-1970s when a modified B variant named A-10 set speed records for helicopters, reaching 386.4 kilometres per hour. At the same time, the Mi-24 was girded for war and became a familiar sight with the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact nations and Soviet client states around the world.

The first use of the Mi-24 in combat occurred with Ethiopian forces in the Ogaden War with Somalia in 1977-78. Libyan forces deployed the Hind during interventions in the civil war in neighbouring Chad from 1978-87, while the helicopter served in numerous conflicts in succeeding years in sub-Saharan

Africa, the Balkans, Sri Lanka, Central America, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine. Although actual results remain in question, aerial combat between Iraqi Mi-24s and American-built Bell SeaCobra gunships occurred on several occasions during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88.

The heavily armed Mi-24 achieved Cold War fame as a devastating attack helicopter during a decade of Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan from 1979-89. The Hind was adept at suppressing guerrillas of the anti-government Mujahideen, sometimes attacking in pairs or flights of four to disrupt ambushes of convoys and enemy movement day or night. The Mujahideen nicknamed the feared Hind 'Satan's Chariot'. Susceptibility to shoulder-fired heat-seeking missiles, particularly the US-made FIM-92 Stinger, led to modifications in combat tactics. Instead of attacking from higher altitude, Hind pilots often flew at low levels and popped up from the horizon to deliver ordnance.



The Mi-24 assault helicopter has stubby wings that assist with lift capabilities and stability during takeoff and flight

REVIEWS

Our pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

CHURCHILL AND THE DARDANELLES

Writer: Christopher M Bell **Publisher:** Oxford University Press, 2017 **Price:** £25 **Released:** Out now

A CAMPAIGN WITH A LONG SHADOW OVER THE FUTURE PRIME MINISTER, THE DARDANELLES CAMPAIGN IS METICULOUSLY RESEARCHED IN THIS BOOK

For more than a century after the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915, this disastrous World War I episode and the role of the man most closely associated with it remain enveloped in controversy. The names Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles Straits are intrinsically linked and as author Christopher M Bell tells us in his meticulously researched and readable account, "the campaign still casts a long shadow over Churchill's reputation."

In March 1915, British and French naval forces launched an attack to attempt to breach the defences of the 38-mile-long Dardanelles waterway.

Securing the Straits that separate Europe from Asia would at once safeguard the Suez Canal and oil supplies, provide access from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea and allow the Allies to deliver war materiel to Russian forces. It was a foregone conclusion that with Allied warships at Constantinople, Turkey would either be knocked out of the war or at the very least its military resistance would be broken. There was also the hope that Turkey's surrender would encourage neutral Greece, Bulgaria and Romania to join the war on the Allied side.

The strategic stakes were high when in March 1915, a fleet of ten British and French warships steamed into the Dardanelles. The Turkish high command was of course aware of this threat and had strongly reinforced their defences in the Straits. With their forts at the mouth of the waterway put out of action by Allied naval bombardment, the Turks deployed what turned out to be the deadliest weapon in their arsenal: mines.

The British naval chief of staff, Commodore Roger Keyes, saw these minefields as the only serious obstacle to an Allied promenade up the Straits to force Constantinople into submission. His optimism proved ill-founded, for on 18 March the fleet

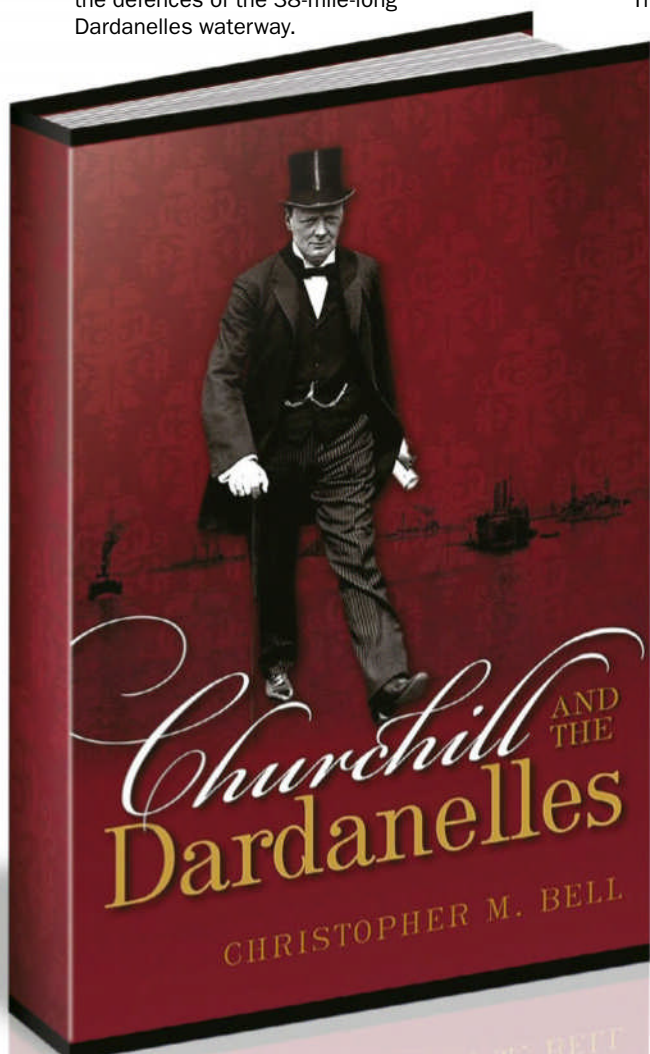
headed into the Dardanelles, unaware that the water had not been effectively cleared by minesweepers. The result was the loss of half the force, with three vessels sunk and two more badly damaged.

Much to the irritation of Winston Churchill, who was serving as first lord of the admiralty, there was clearly little option but to continue the sea offensive with a ground invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula that borders the Straits's northern shore.

Churchill emerges in this book as a man haunted for years afterwards by the legacy of the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign, and by association, the calamities inflicted on the Allies in the subsequent landing on the Gallipoli peninsula. Bell makes it clear that Churchill was neither the hero nor the victim of the saga, and that these campaigns do not lend themselves to black-and-white judgements and sweeping generalisations. It is worth noting that in his history of World War II, Churchill himself acknowledged that, "War is usually a catalogue of blunders."

Churchill was not alone in refusing to accept the fleet's disaster as final defeat, yet the campaign drove him from office in disgrace, left only with a defiant spirit and a determination to clear his name. This he achieved in 1940 when he was elected prime minister and led Britain to victory in the next war.

"WAR IS USUALLY A CATALOGUE OF BLUNDERS" – Winston Churchill



Sinking of Battleship Bouvet at the Dardanelles

KINGMAKERS

HOW POWER IN ENGLAND WAS WON AND LOST ON THE WELSH FRONTIER

Writer: Timothy Venning Publisher: Amberley Price: £20 Released: Out now

THIS HISTORY OF THE MARCHER LORDS TELLS THEIR STORY IN EYE-GLAZING DETAIL

The great strength of this book is the forensic detail with which it examines the Marcher lords, the Anglo-Norman barons installed by William the Conqueror to guard his border with Wales. Unfortunately, this is also the book's great weakness. For those uninitiated into the murderous feuds and labyrinthine family politics of the region, the endless succession of betrayals, murders and double crossings dealt out through generations of bloodshed, causes the eyes to glaze over and the head to nod. The author's extreme reluctance to use paragraphs - their average length is four pages - also does not help to bring into focus this parade of feuding barons and fratricidal Welsh princes.

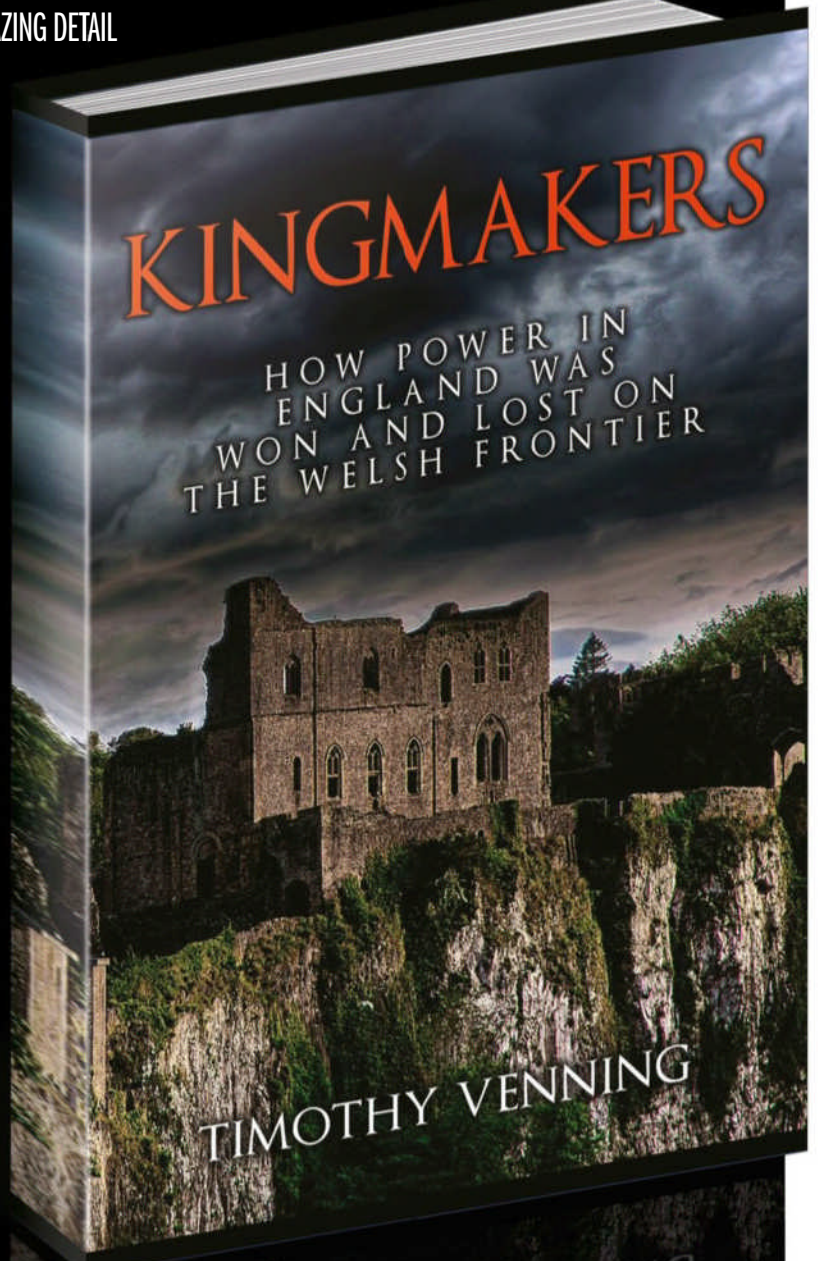
To deal with the author's virtues first, we must note and commend his command of the source material. Only someone completely at home with the history of the Marcher lords could negotiate the extraordinarily complicated family feuds and rivalries that drove much of the politics of the region. Timothy Venning clearly has no difficulty in remembering that. For instance, Gerald of Windsor's wife, Nest, was the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdr and mistress to Henry II, and together they produced Maurice Fitzgerald, who would go on to found the Fitzgerald dynasty in Ireland; another son who produced the Carew family via his lordship of Caer Yw Castle; and a daughter who was the mother of the historian Gerald of Wales.

Indeed, such is Venning's command of the intricacies of family relationships that it is a shame he didn't live then. He would have understood perfectly the extraordinarily complicated knots of relationships that drove the history of the Marches and, later, Ireland. For the reader who takes similar delight in learning the dynastic details of the time, this book will be perfect. There is simply nothing to match its attention to familial detail.

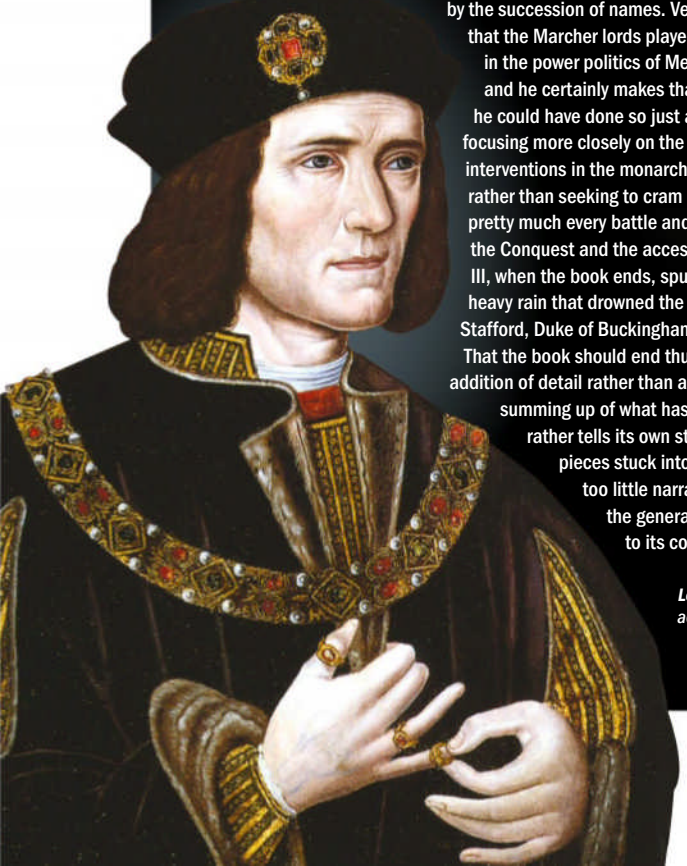
However, this is also the book's great fault. The mark of a great historian is the mastery of detail combined with the gift of knowing what detail to include and what to exclude. There is no doubting Venning's mastery of the detail, but very little of that detail is excluded from the story, meaning that the general reader is likely to be quickly overwhelmed by the succession of names. Venning's thesis is that the Marcher lords played a major part in the power politics of Medieval England and he certainly makes that case. However, he could have done so just as well by focusing more closely on the more significant interventions in the monarchy by these lords, rather than seeking to cram into his book pretty much every battle and plot between the Conquest and the accession of Richard III, when the book ends, sputtering out in the heavy rain that drowned the revolt of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham.

That the book should end thus, with a final addition of detail rather than a rounded summing up of what has gone before, rather tells its own story. It's a book of pieces stuck into history, but with too little narrative drive to push the general reader through to its conclusion.

Left: Ending with the accession of Richard III, *Kingmakers* explores the Marcher lords



“VENNING’S THESIS IS THAT THE MARCHER LORDS PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN THE POWER POLITICS OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND HE CERTAINLY MAKES THAT CASE”



A PERFIDIOUS DISTORTION OF HISTORY

THE VERSAILLES PEACE TREATY AND THE SUCCESS OF THE NAZIS

Author: Jürgen Tampke Publisher: Scribe Price: £20 Released: Out now

A FRANK AND FASCINATING DISMISSAL OF THE 1919 MYTH

As a postscript to World War I and a preamble to World War II, 1919's Treaty of Versailles is rarely the focus of popular history, lurking forever off camera – and it's in that gloom that mythology thrives largely unchecked. *A Perfidious Distortion of History* comes described as 'controversial' but in truth, Jürgen Tampke is one of a growing number of respected voices calling for a frank reappraisal of the treaty that "won the war but lost the peace" by wounding Germany so mortally that it set the nation on the path to fascism and saw an even wider world war replace the first. It's a cause that Margaret MacMillan has authoritatively advanced since at least 2001, but that doesn't make Tampke's intervention unwelcome by any means.

Like MacMillan, Tampke argues that much of what began to take shape in Germany throughout the 1930s wasn't unique to Hitler, that expansionism, militarism, Anschluss and anti-Semitism were increasingly loud drumbeats that were sounding from almost every corner of the political establishment.

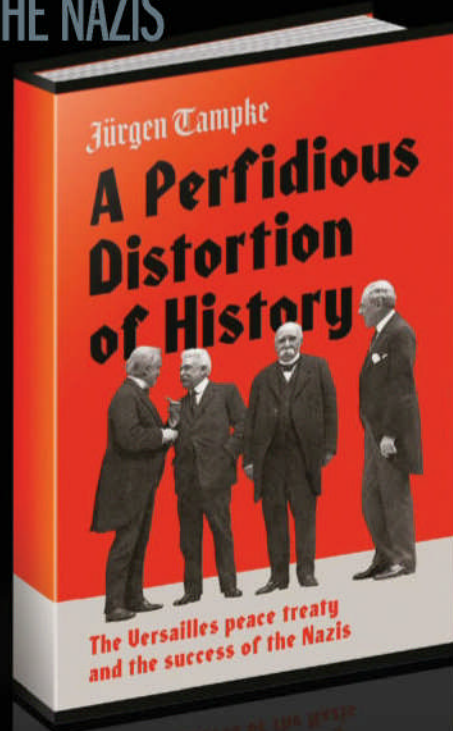
In going back to the German Wars of Unification, Tampke shows how these tendencies manifest in the late 19th century, were amplified by the regime of Kaiser Wilhelm II and were perpetuated, albeit to genocidal extremes, by the Third Reich. Throughout this journey, it's made clear that the economic turmoil of the Weimar government was self-inflicted, reparations were either written off, paid in kind or funded by

loans, and disarmament was brazenly flaunted by a largely intact Prussian officer class who saw a second war as necessary – and even desirable – before the fluttering red banners of NSDAP were a gleam in Anton Drexler's eye.

The simple truth is that Germany went to war in 1914 as continental Europe's rising industrial powerhouse, and after four years looting the industrial belt of France and Belgium – flooding coal mines and tearing up railway lines as they retreated – they ended the war as continental Europe's undisputed industrial powerhouse, more than able to meet their treaty commitments.

The myth of Versailles's all-scouring 'Carthaginian peace' is traced to two factors: a concerted effort from the German government to actively promote the myth of injustice and suffering, and the wavering enthusiasm of some of the allies, especially disillusioned civil servants like the celebrated economist John Maynard Keynes who furnished the world with that oft-quoted reference to Carthage. (Keynes, Tampke reminds us, eventually revised his opinion.)

Tampke's rebuttals strike like howitzers but the tone is perhaps too polemical to carry beyond those already sympathetic to his arguments. The selective and sparing use of sources may keep his argument flowing briskly along but it leaves *Perfidious Distortion* open to attack – the cherry picking of data and the constant shifting of goalposts being two of the regular tactics employed by those who distort history for ideological ends. If Deborah



Lipstadt's Irving-baiting *Denying the Holocaust* (1993) is the standard to which the debunker is held – thorough, systematic and sober – then Tampke's presentation cuts too many corners.

If the argument for the punishing exceptionalism of Versailles is as weak as he claims – and there's a strong case for this – then it cannot be challenged by the same thin soup, no matter how flavoursome a recipe.

ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDS...

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

12 HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS RECOUNT THEIR HARROWING STORIES ON CAMERA

CERTIFICATE: TBC DIRECTOR: CLAIRE FERGUSON CAST: MIETEK PEMPER, ED MOSBERG, REGINA LEWIS, VICTOR LEWIS RELEASED: 16 JUNE

Presenting the recollections of 12 survivors, *Destination Unknown* is a swift 78 minutes and mixes talking head interviews with grim footage sourced from global archives. As fascinating and often heart-wrenching as it is, Claire Ferguson's doc feels like a missed opportunity somewhat and clumsily structured.

Survivors living in the aftermath of profound tragedy, their collective and individual grief is what Ferguson should have exclusively focused on. While the film does touch upon these themes, especially toward the end, it could have done much more so. "The pain is wherever I am. I feel the pain every single day," as one interviewee starkly puts it.

A woman proudly showing off photos of long deceased relatives (all killed in gas chambers), talking with such clarity and love is without a doubt *Destination Unknown's* most emotionally devastating scene. It's unbearably sad in ways most of us will never understand.



THE SEYMOURS OF WOLF HALL

A PORTRAIT OF THE FAMILY OF HENRY VIII'S QUEEN JANE

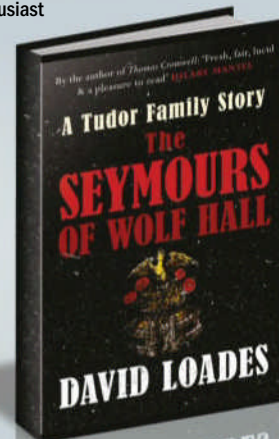
AUTHOR: DAVID LOADES PUBLISHER: AMBERLEY PUBLISHING PRICE: £9.99 RELEASED: OUT NOW

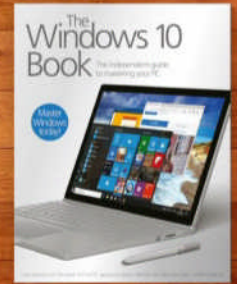
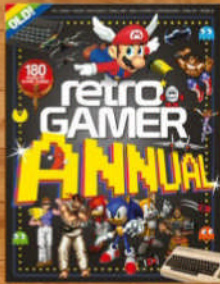
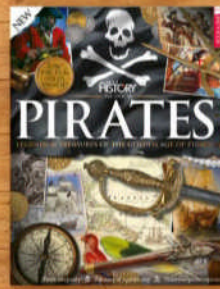
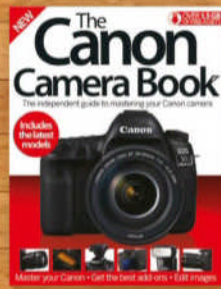
During the reign of Henry VIII, the Seymour family seems to come out of nowhere to rise to the pinnacle of power in England. Loades investigates the background and characteristics of this family to discover how one of their number became Queen without the scheming and positioning that had put the Boleyn faction in power. Arriving with William the Conqueror, the Seymours seem to be a rare example of a family who climbed the ranks on their own merit, with siblings Jane and Edward finding themselves close to the king without machinations.

The book does not linger too long on Jane's time as queen, and brings other members of the family to the fore. In particular, the reader is treated to a more detailed background on Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, whose meteoric rise from courtier to Lord Protector is often assumed to be due to his sister's position. Loades provides a compelling argument for the idea that it was Edward's personal skill and character that made him useful to the King.

The details included in this book are enjoyable for the Tudor enthusiast looking for more information on the Seymour family. However, it is somewhat odd to discover what details are not included, such as the scandal with Edward's first wife and disinherited children. There are also clear errors, it is stated that Catherine Grey was imprisoned with her husband, the younger Edward Seymour, when the purpose of their imprisonment was to keep them apart.

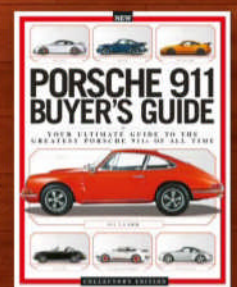
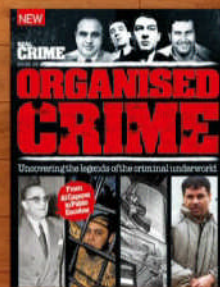
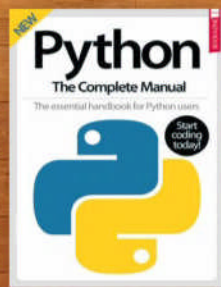
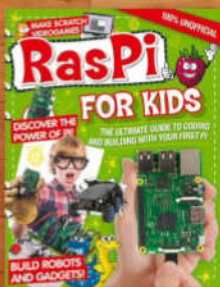
The remainder of the Seymour story beyond the Tudor period is told in a handful of pages, making this a book primarily focused on Edward, with brief chapters on the lives of Jane, Thomas, Henry, and Edward VI. This book takes a look at an intriguing family whose rise to power could have placed their descendants upon the throne of England for generations. Tudor enthusiasts looking to expand their knowledge of the prominent players at the Tudor court will enjoy seeing the Seymours revealed here.





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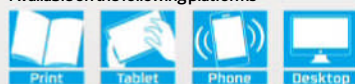


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CIVIL WAR PISTOL

This large firearm once belonged to a Cheshire Parliamentarian who attempted to flee a failed uprising dressed a woman

Below: Although slightly damaged by woodworm, Booth's pistol still bears the maker's mark above the trigger

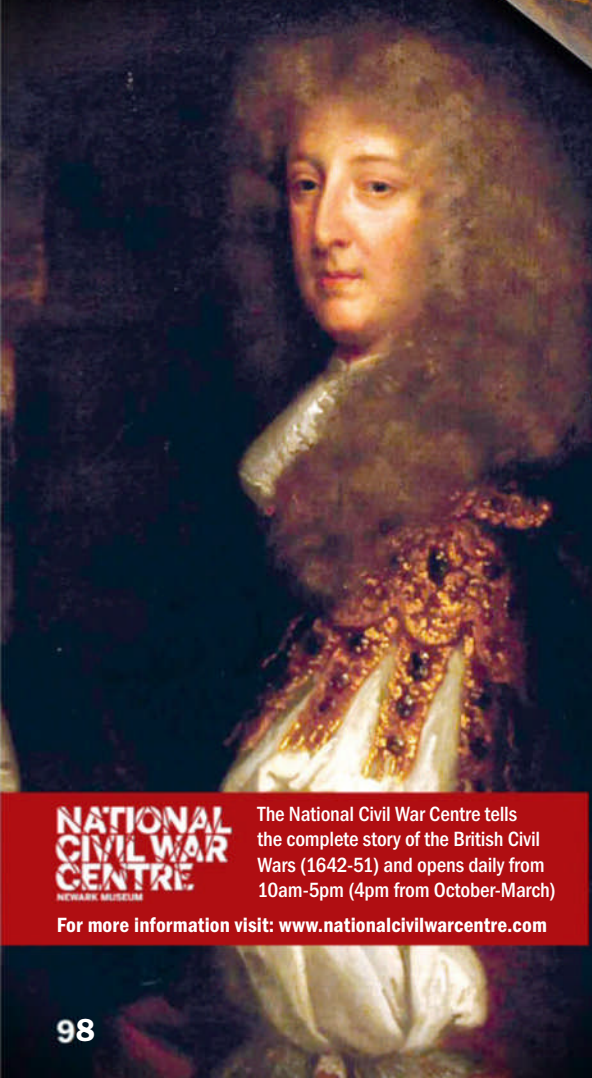
Although Parliamentarians during the British Civil Wars have been caricatured as dour Puritans, some, like George Booth, 1st Baron Delamer, led colourful lives. As MP for Cheshire, Booth fought for Parliament during the civil wars and took a leading part in the Siege of Chester as a colonel. However by 1659, during the Interregnum, he changed sides in the chaos that ensued after Oliver Cromwell's death.

After becoming embroiled in a failed uprising, Booth tried to flee, dressed up as a woman – his cover was eventually blown when he asked for a razor with which to shave.

After imprisonment in the Tower of London, he was released and sent to the Netherlands to invite Charles II to return to England. After the Restoration, Booth's reward was £10,000 from Parliament and the title Baron Delamer. His new honour gave him the right to nominate six knights and he died a respected peer in 1684.

One of Booth's personal weapons, particularly during the civil wars, would have been this substantial cavalry pistol. A small brass plaque on the underside states, 'Cromwellian Dog Lock Pistol 1640' and it would have fired by cavalrymen before swords were drawn for close combat. The firing mechanisms of 'doglocks' were a major step in the evolution of the flintlock firearm and the pistols were so large that cavalrymen carried them in special buckets with the butts facing forward. This was to enable the rider room to draw the pistol, which in some cases could be 41 centimetres long.

Below: George Booth is possibly the only man to have been imprisoned at the Tower of London for attempting to shave



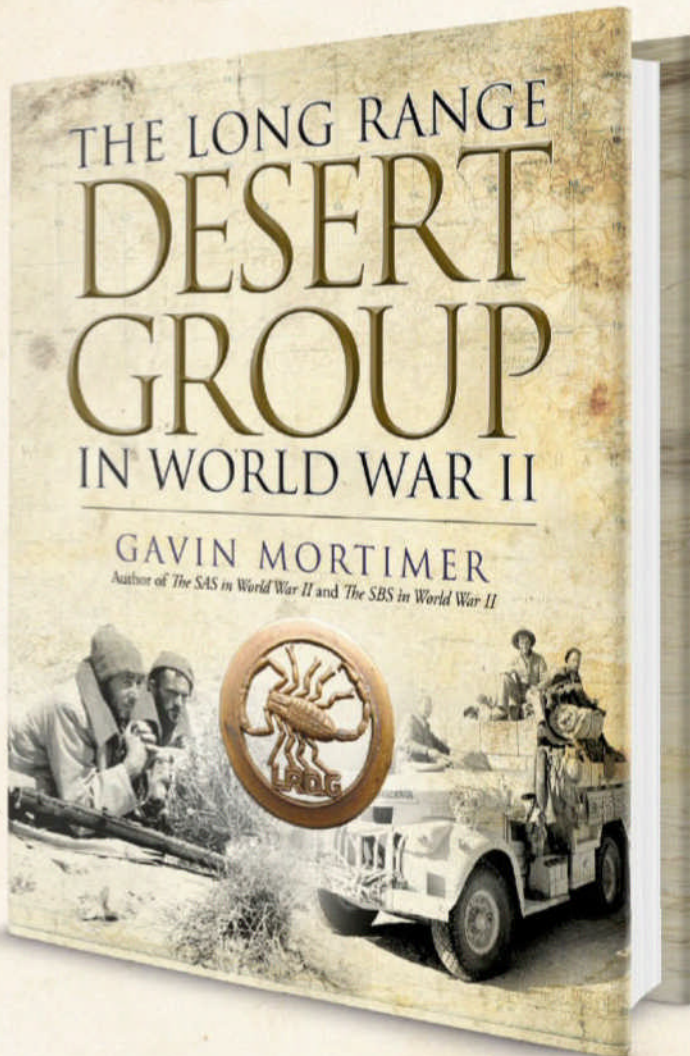
Left: The pistol's 'doglock' mechanism did away with previous pan covers and incorporated them along with steel into a 'battery'. Although this was a tiny design change, it marked the transition from Renaissance pistols to flintlocks

Main images: National Civil War Centre

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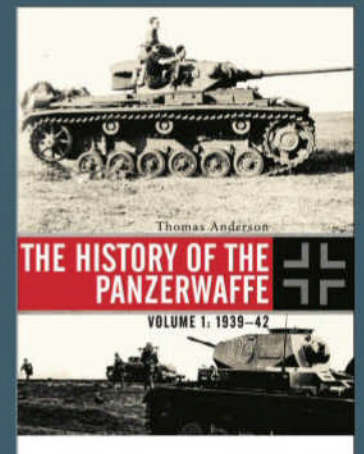
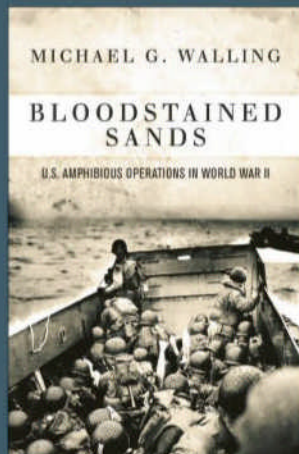
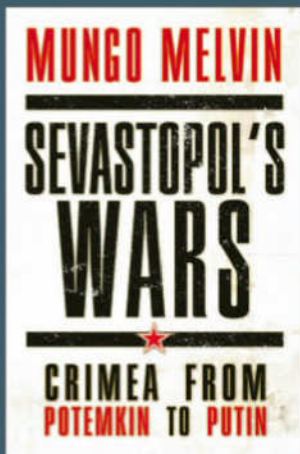


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